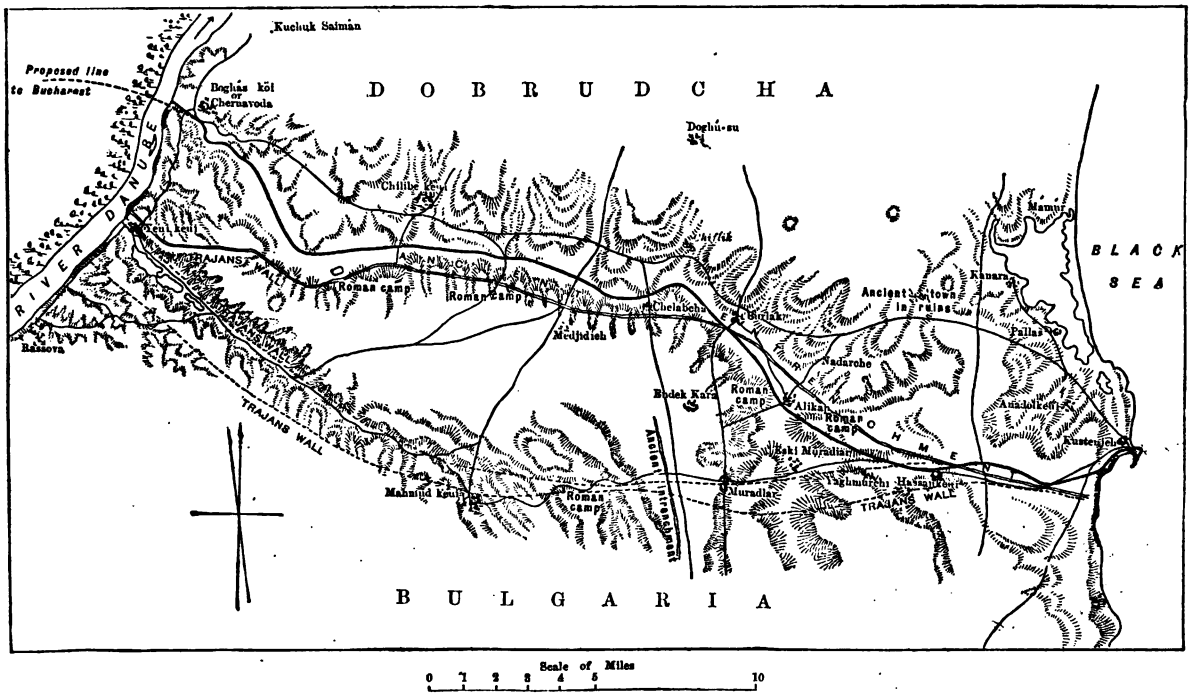
FIVE YEARS IN BULGARIA



RAILWAY FROM THE DANUBE TO THE BLACK SEA, SHOWING THE LINE OF TRAJAN'S WALL.

BETWEEN THE DANUBE AND BLACK SEA

OR

Five Years in Bulgaria

By HENRY C. BARKLEY

CIVIL ENGINEER

'Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless'd with the set phrase of peace;
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have us'd
Their dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle;
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a' round unvarnish'd tale deliver
* * * * * *
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field;
Of hair-breadth 'scapes.'—OTH. *Act I. Sc.* 3.

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PREFACE.

THE following lines were written some months ago, before late events in Turkey had concentrated the attention of the public on the provinces in which the greater part of my life in the East, extending over twelve years, was passed. In the present book it appears as if I had spent five years only in Turkey; but after the Kustendjie Railway was finished, I was again employed for seven years on the Varna and Rustchuk Railway, and was thus brought very much into contact with the inhabitants of those countries. I frequently made expeditions into the Balkan mountains in order to shoot the roe-deer and wild boars, which are very numerous there. During these expeditions I invariably lived in the Bulgarian villages, and thus had opportunities of becoming intimately acquainted with the habits and character of the Bulgarians. Perhaps a short account of them may be interesting at the present time.

They are all, or nearly all, peasant proprietors, cultivating land which nominally belongs to the Sultan,

but which is practically their own freehold property. In Bulgaria there are no feudal chiefs as in Bosnia, and the Turkish villagers hold their land on much the same terms as the Bulgarians. As the population of Bulgaria is scanty and the soil fertile, there is not much 'earth-hunger.' Each man, whether Turk or Bulgar, has as much land as he can conveniently cultivate; and though of course disputes about land do sometimes arise, they are much less frequent than might be expected in a country where legal landmarks are almost unknown.

The Bulgarians (and also the Turkish villagers) are loud and incessant in their complaints of the injustice and tyranny of the Turkish officials. All—from the governor-general to the hangman—think it right and just, when on a journey, to quarter themselves on the peasants without ever thinking of paying; and at the same time they demand the services of their host and his family, and the best of everything there is to be had. The largest and most prosperous of the villages are built as far as possible from the main roads leading to and from the fortified towns such as Widdin, Rustchuk, Shumla, &c. If they are on the line of march the troops live on them at free quarters, their carts and beasts are seized for transport purposes, and the owners themselves forced to accompany them as drivers, and are obliged to find food for themselves and fodder for the cattle, for all of which they receive no recompense. In consequence of this all the villages that, from force of circumstances, have to be near some main road, are a

miserable collection of hovels offering but small temptation to the traveller.

About twelve miles from Varna, and not far off the route to Shumla, is the flourishing village of Gebedji, which is partly Turkish, partly Bulgar. On entering it one is at once struck by the appearance of prosperity exhibited in the well-built houses and large flocks of cattle. Between this village and the road is a swamp with a narrow but deep brook running through it. To assist in the construction of the line which passed by the village, I caused a road to be made across the marsh and a wooden bridge thrown over the brook. The first night after the bridge was completed it was cut down; and, on making inquiries about it, a Turk told me that, rather than live with this easy access to the road, the inhabitants, both Turks and Bulgars, would burn their houses and migrate to some spot where Turkish officials, Turkish troops, and above all Turkish Zaptiehs, could not so easily get at them. 'Above all, Zaptiehs,' for they are the constant and never-ending curse of all the villages, whether Turkish or Bulgar. They are recruited from the very lowest and most ruffianly of the Turks. Many, if not most of them, have been brigands, and all are robbers. Their pay (even when they get it) is not sufficient to support them, and therefore they depend on their *position* to secure the comforts of life. They *live* on the peasants, and all they have, from their pipe to their horse, has been robbed from them. Over and over again I have seen every woman and girl of an entire Christian village disappear as if by magic at the

approach of a Zaptieh; and when he enters the village all the men stand staring about watching to see what may take place, like a flock of sheep when a strange dog comes among them.

Beyond complaining of the injustice of the Turkish officials, and the way they are plundered by the troops and police, the Bulgars have always appeared to me patient under the Turkish yoke, and I never became cognisant of anything like an organised conspiracy against the Government. In 1865-66 there is no doubt that something of the sort did exist. A committee of Bulgarians used to meet at Bucharest, and the Russian Consul in that city frequently attended their meetings. Eventually a certain number of Bulgarians and others formed themselves into small bands and crossed the Danube, with the intention of stirring up a revolution in Bulgaria. I believe that they did not meet with a single adherent in Bulgaria, and very soon they were all arrested and hanged by Midhat Pasha, who was at that time governor of the Villayet of the Danube.

The Bulgarians are not by any means a warlike race. They are very industrious, penurious, and rather apathetic. As workmen and *employés* I preferred them to all others. They are both persevering and intelligent; and very shortly, under English instruction, attained to a higher class of work than, as far as I can recollect, was reached by any other native of those regions. We had a young Bulgarian clerk, the son of a village peasant, who educated himself—with a little

help that was given him when a boy by an American missionary—until he could read and write four European languages, including English, and was a first-rate accountant and book-keeper. We had also Bulgarian engine-drivers and fitters; and the whole of the plate-laying and repairing of the Kustendjie and Varna and Rustchuk Railways very soon fell into their hands, and is, I believe, carried out by them under their own foremen up to this time.

The Bulgar villager produces by his individual industry almost everything he requires in this world. The clothes of both men and women are entirely home made. The men wear a sheep-skin cap, either black or white, a short rough jacket of good home-spun cloth over a waistcoat of the same, loose baggy knickerbockers, cloth gaiters, and cow-skin moccasins. Their underclothes consist of a linen shirt and drawers made from home-grown flax. The women, in summer, wear a handkerchief twisted into their long hair, a linen jacket gathered in at the waist, and a home-spun woollen petticoat reaching just below the knee, their feet and ankles left bare. In winter, both men and women wear sheep-skin jackets, the wool turned inside, and the exterior prettily embroidered.

The houses are well and substantially built of either timber, stone, or 'wattle and dab;' the dwelling-rooms are generally over a large stable, in which the cattle are housed at night. To economise warmth, of which a Bulgar never has too much, they leave a hole about as big as a man's head open through the floor of the

rooms into the stable, through which ascends the heat generated by the cattle, and with it a smell you may almost see! This is rather trying for fastidious Europeans; but with this exception the rooms are comfortable, dry, clean, and warm. Furniture there is next to none, for all squat on mats on the ground, after the manner of Turks. In the sleeping-room is always found piles of coverlids and woollen rugs, all made by the women, and also in most houses some home-made linen sheets. The coverlids are quilted, either with fine combed wool or the down off the bulrush, and all are warm and comfortable on a winter's night, and in summer form a soft bed to lie on.

As the children grow up they continue to live in their father's house, and one may often see two or three generations under the same roof. They are the most good-tempered people possible; and though I have spent months in Bulgar houses, I never heard of a family quarrel. I never lived among any race where female virtue is more highly prized than it is among the Bulgarians, and I can safely assert that though our English workmen, men of all sorts and all characters, lived for months at a time in Bulgar villages on the most intimate terms with the women, yet there was never the faintest whisper of scandal. The village girls, though always ready for a laugh or a talk, never drift into levity of conduct, but seem innately to possess virtue and self-respect. As a race, both men and women are well grown and good-looking, and one can see, from their lissom erect carriage and healthy appearance, that

from infancy they have been well fed and well clothed. If only absolute security for person and property could be obtained, I believe Bulgaria would be one of the most prosperous countries in Europe; and even as it is, I should be glad to think that the labouring poor of England and Ireland were as well off, as well clothed, and well housed, as the Bulgars.

I have many old friends both amongst the Turks and Bulgarians, and I sincerely hope that the troubles of both may soon be happily terminated, and that they may yet enjoy a prosperous future.

H. C. B.

October 6, 1876.

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BETWEEN THE DANUBE AND BLACK SEA.

CHAPTER I.

Arrival at Varna—Travelling companions—Passing the Custom House—Bakshish—Turkish powder-magazine—Sergeant C—— and his chief—Preparation for the road—An exploring excursion—Town of Varna.

THE great fight had been fought! and the great war was over! Of the many thousands that had been drawn to it, some for duty, some for glory, some for fun, and others as part of that great fishing fraternity who cast their lines wherever the waters are troubled, few were left behind, except those who were to return no more. 'The sick man' had undergone his operation, and was said to be doing well; and it was also said, and often repeated throughout Europe, that in Turkey was opened a grand field for European enterprise and English energy. As a representative of the latter, I found myself, with two brothers, steaming into Varna Bay on an Austrian Lloyd's boat soon after daylight on a fine September morning of 1857, and I may

say for myself that the boasted British energy in me was at a very low ebb, and that I might be called a walking headache. We had only left the Bosphorus the night before, and as I had only lately arrived by sea at Constantinople, and had had a rough passage all the way from England, I fancied that I had found my sea-legs, and that never again should I feel that most awful of all awful feelings, sea-sickness; but a few lively hops of the steamer, first on one side then on the other, then forwards a bit and then sideways again, gave me to understand I had yet something to learn; and though since that time I have been up and down the Black Sea a hundred times, that lesson has been never finished, and I trust I may now be allowed to absent myself from that school for the rest of my life.

I must now say, in as few words as I can, something of our plans and of our party. We were going up to Kustendjie on business connected with the proposed railway from Tchernavoda on the Danube to that place; and our party consisted of my elder brother, a man about thirty years old, who had spent the last six years in Turkey and who spoke several languages including Turkish; myself, aged twenty, and another brother a year or so younger. We two young ones were pupils of the elder, and our knowledge of languages was pretty nearly confined to our mother tongue, and our ideas of Turkey were vague in the extreme. I did not like to expose my ignorance at that time; but I don't mind confessing, at this distance, that I thought of it as a vast plain, where the entire population were engaged in

growing rhubarb, and that the sport of the country was drowning faithless wives tied up in sacks in the sea.

I must not forget to mention that we were accompanied by Misseri, that king of couriers of Eöthen celebrity, who had joined us at the last moment just to stretch his legs by the trip, and shake off the dust and cobwebs of Pera. Our servants were, first, Clianthe, a good-looking, cunning, civil Greek, as cook, who had been employed by my brother before on a similar excursion, and who was taken on again because his own peculiar form of swindling was known, and because on a desert with no materials he could serve up a dinner in five minutes! Then came Georgey, a Greek from Syria, short, squat, and hideous, with no roof to his mouth, but one of the best servants in a rough country I ever had; and, as he was quite a fool on all subjects except his work, we were able to bowl him over whenever he tried to cheat us, which was always. We also had two cavasses with us; both Arnouts, swaggering, grinning ruffians, in 'fustan,' or petticoats, and with a perfect eruption of arms growing out of their stomachs. They were supposed to fight for us if we came across robbers; but their chief use was to impress the villagers with a sense of our importance, for without this one may starve in Turkey, as respect is only for the strong. No sooner was the anchor down than a perfect swarm of what looked to me like cut-throats and thieves (and I was not far wrong) attacked us and our baggage, and, when I had just made up my mind that all was lost for ever, I found myself pushed headlong down the steps

of the steamer into a boat, where sat Misseri and my brother G——, quietly talking together as they rolled up their cigarettes, and the luggage and men were all settled in another boat close at hand.

We were soon at the Skelley or short pier, and, pushing our way among heavily laden yelling hammals, boatmen, sleeping dogs, thieves, and loafers from half the countries of the world, on our way to the Goomruk or custom house, where at last we found ourselves, and where we were shown into a filthy room in which was an old Turk squatting on his divan. He proved a civil, quiet old fellow, and soon we were squatting by his side, drinking black coffee and smoking cigarettes, while we afforded a nice fresh foreign dish to about ten thousand 'F sharps' (and they *are* sharp in Varna!) that were swarming over us in all directions. In a few minutes our goods (including two good ponies) were standing in the street opposite the Goomruk awaiting inspection, which was gone through without anything being opened except the *hand* of Monsieur Misseri, which was done directly over the hand of the old Turk, and the trick answered to perfection. It was here I heard for the first time that magic word 'Bakshish.' It is powerful all over the civilised world, but in Turkey it has become literally a ruling power, and I shall have to mention it over and over again in these pages. Well, friend Bakshish having done his work, we were free to enter the town, and, leaving our baggage in charge of the servants, off we set, through the arched gate and up a dirty, badly paved street; past the Austrian and

French post-office; past the great powder-magazine, where there is stored 30,000 barrels of gunpowder, and where a Turkish Topjie (artilleryman) is on guard. He sits on a low stool in the open doorway, dressed in a fez cap, a ragged shirt with its sleeves turned up to his elbows, a red sash round his waist, and then, the only sign of his being a soldier, his blue trowsers with a red stripe. The knees are of the baggiest, and the length of the shortest, for they only reach half way down the calf of his leg. I have since seen thousands of the like soldiers, but have never once seen the trowsers lower than the ankle bone, so I suppose they are made short on purpose. The Topjie smokes his pipe as he sits on guard, and when finished knocks out the ashes on the stones, and we can't help wondering what would be the result if one of those sparks should be carried in by the wind through the open door and ignite the contents of one of those barrels. The Guard would go off duty suddenly, and for the first time in his life the handsome old Turk selling barley-sugar opposite would be *hurried*; but it is useless going on—all business would be suspended! On we go, past the Fish Market, such as it is, into the Grand Rue, where most of the foreign merchants live. I said before that few were left of the many who came to these parts for the great war, but half way down this street we met one of those few, and certainly he was a splendid specimen. Sergeant C—— was here, with his chief, Mr. Rideout, inspecting the telegraphs in Bulgaria. They were both in the Royal Artillery, and had fought

through the war in the Crimea from the first landing, and, when all was over, they had volunteered to help the Turks as long as the British Government could spare them. At the time I saw them, their stay was nearly over, for a few days later Mr. Rideout and (I believe) Sergeant C—— were called home to go and take their part in the great struggle then commencing in India. Rideout had not been home since the Crimean war began, and now, when he did return, I believe he had hardly one clear day in old England before he was again on his way to fight for her.

We were soon shown the way to Rideout's rooms, where we found a good breakfast and the most cheery, jolly host in Europe, which together soon cured my headache and fished my energy once more to the surface. Breakfast over, all was hurry and bustle, for we had determined to start at once *en route* for Kustendjie. Passports had to be made out by the local Governor, salaams made to him, pipes smoked with him, and coffee drank with him. Two arabas had to be hired and packed with our luggage, camp beds and a walled tent, riding-horses procured for four of us, and a thousand and one things to be done in a hurry, and this in a land where no hurry is! however, there were willing hands to do all, and our host's were not the least helpful.

Whilst those who could speak Turkish were thus busily engaged, we youngsters, feeling we were of little use and longing to see what a Turkish provincial town was like, slipped off on an exploring excursion.

Varna is situated on the sea, at the opening of a

valley which averages about five miles across, and is midway between the hills that rise on either side. On the east is a line of low but steep hills, on the top of which the country is pretty level. To the west are the last spurs of the Balkan, which from a distance appear most beautifully wooded, but from which every stick of good timber has, under the wasteful management of the Turk, disappeared years ago. The valley winds away north for about fifty miles, till it is lost in the high ground near Shumla, the virgin fortress of these parts, and the pride of the Turks. Between Varna and the Balkan spurs is a morass which extends inland for a mile, and then ends in a splendidly clear fresh-water lake, nine miles long and averaging two miles wide. At the head of this lake is the prettily situated village of Aladdin, and it was near this the British troops were encamped before they were moved on to the Crimea. The town of Varna is fortified with a wall and deep fosse all round it, and, as is usual in Turkish towns, is divided into different quarters—such as the Turkish, the Bulgar and Greek, the Jewish, the Armenian, and even the Gipsey quarter. It is governed by a Pasha, or rather tormented by one, for the Turks are let alone and do just as they like, whilst the whole of the Government staff is employed in squeezing money from the 'Giaour,'—a little for the Padishah, and a lot for themselves.

The interior of the town looks as if all the houses had been shot down out of a big dice-box, and then the streets made to wind amongst them; here a fairly

good house or magazine, there a 'wattle and dab' hovel with only two rooms. The hovel stands half way out into the street and the big house well back, but so placed that the back corner is presented to the front. There are no gardens round the houses, and the courtyards are hardly large enough to turn a horse in. In each of these yards is an enormous cesspool, quite open, where the filth of ages has accumulated, and yet there is rarely ever any illness in the town. Typhus and scarlet fever are hardly known; and the cholera only came there with the European troops, and even in the great outbreak of 1866, when it raged all round, it did not visit Varna. This I attribute to there being a supply of good fresh water brought down from the hills in pipes, and delivered at fountains in every street of the town—the only good thing I ever discovered in Varna.

The streets are paved with large stones as big as pumpkins; or rather they were so, for now the stones are all loose and displaced, and there are holes so deep and wide that a horse has to jump to get over them. In fine weather the dust is knee deep, and when it is wet the streets are rivers of mud.

CHAPTER II.

Arabas and drivers—The start—Varna Valley—Caught in a trap—A tight boot—A merchant carried off by brigands—Turkish police—Camping for the night.

On returning from our rambles we found two arabas, the first driven by Ibrahim, and the second by Neuri (both Turks), drawn up at the door. I did not much like the look of Neuri, but I little thought that, before three days were past, I should be thirsting for his blood; such however was the sad fact—but I must not overrun the scent. If I did not like the look of Neuri, neither did I like the look of the two arabas. They, to my British eyes, were the frailest things in the world to trust one's goods to. There was not a bit of iron about them; but they were pegged together with wood, and creaked, writhed, and twisted at every turn of the wheels. But their weakness was their strength, for they were so loosely put together they would bend before they broke. Three ponies driven abreast were in each of them—wretched, underbred beasts with rope harness, and their tails plaited up till they looked like Bologna sausages, and then hauled by a string tight along their sides and tied to their collars. This is

done to prevent their switching their tails at the millions of flies that settle on them, and answers three purposes—it saves the tails from being swished away; it saves the driver's eyes being swished out by the tails, for he sits cross-legged in the front of his waggon within six inches of them; and it enables the flies to punish the horses, and thus saves the driver the trouble of doing so himself.

When all was packed and stowed away, we went in to have a parting snack with our host, and then, hardly daring to hope it, proposed he should join our expedition. Much to our joy he at once agreed, saying it was just the thing he should like. He would ride with us, share our tent, and enjoy once more a night's camping out, and return on the morrow.

In a few minutes he was into his breeches and a neat pair of Peel's boots, with a tooth-brush stuck in the leg of one, the brush part hanging over the top. We were soon off; but had to go slowly at first, as we dare not leave the arabas till outside the town, as, had we done so, the whole of the day might, and probably would, have been taken up in buying just a box of lights, a bit of tobacco, a loaf or two of bread—saying goodbye to friends and having a parting cup of coffee. As it was, we only stopped three times, drank two coffees, and so made a fair start out of the town. It was a glaring hot day and the ground as dry as powder, and everything that should be green burnt to dust colour.

From the gate of the town, a level plain stretched

before us for a distance of seven miles, cut up by winding tracks made by the bullock carts bringing in corn; and then came a steep hill about eight hundred feet high, on the top of which was the great table-land of the Dobritzka, or, as it is pronounced, Dobrudja, which means in English 'Good Pasture.' The first fifteen miles of our journey was through scrubby brush composed of acacia and oak, and we had settled to get through this the first day, so as to have a fair start in the open next morning.

As Monsieur Misseri was with the arabas, we light horsemen ventured to ride on in front, knowing that under his management our goods were sure to turn up at the proper time. I fear we did not behave as good travellers should when starting on a ride of a hundred miles, for we first had a nice gallop to stretch the horses' legs, and then Rideout seduced us into jumping the stone walls and wattled fences that surround the villages —at least my two brothers joined in this amusement, for they were on their own horses, whereas I was on a hired beast who had had too much of the road to consent to such low Giaour ways; he was a true Mussulman and went down on his knees seven times a day, and I at last became quite an adept at turning over his head on to my back. Outside the first village we passed, we saw a circle of stones about twenty yards in diameter, which we learnt was a threshing-floor. The stones are set on edge and stand about four feet high. The ground inside is firmly beaten down, the corn in the straw is thrown upon it, and then a drove of mares and foals are driven

in and trotted round till the corn is trodden out and the straw broken into half-inch lengths. This is then all tossed in large wicker baskets, when the straw and dust are blown over the wall, and the corn is then collected more or less clean. This plan would hardly answer in England, but does pretty well in a country where one may count on months of fine weather. The wall of this threshing-floor proved too great a temptation; so away went Rideout and his companions, over the first into the enclosure and out the other side, in a manner worthy of a Cotswold horse. At least all but the horse of G. A. B. —which cleverly saw how to put its rider in a fix and refused the jump out. As the floor was not in use, the door was strongly blocked up, so there was nothing for it but to get over the wall somehow. But no, Cole-ei (dun) would not have it, and there he stuck till the arabas came up and the men pulled down a stone and released him. This was a lesson to us all never to jump this horse into a trap again. This jumping caused a further mishap which proved a fearful bore to Rideout; the tooth-brush was shaken from its position and slipped down to the bottom of his boot, and, fish as he would, there was no getting it up again. When bedtime arrived we found that it had wedged the boot so tight, that, though we were all in turn converted into boot-jacks, there was no getting it off, and it ended in poor Rideout going to bed with one boot on; it could not have been comfortable, but nothing seemed to come amiss to this cheery fellow.

We had now arrived at the foot of the hill, and had

to keep with the arabas, as this was said to be the favourite hunting ground of a band of robbers; and a handy spot it must have been for them, for the road was sunk between high banks, covered with brushwood and creepers, and was so narrow that the outside horse in our arabas had to scramble along sideways half way up the bank, and thus did more harm than good just when he was most wanted to pull.

About two months previous to this, a Varna merchant with a servant was going up this hill on his way to the Dobrudja to buy wool, when he was suddenly pounced upon and carried off by a band of ten robbers. They tied his hands together, and then fastened him by the neck to one of their horses' tails; and in this way he was made to march great distances each day, for it is the custom of these brigands never to remain in the same district two days following. The servant was sent in to Varna to the merchant's wife, with a demand for 300*l.* ransom. She had nearly collected the money when one night her husband suddenly appeared at her door, he having induced one of the robbers to bolt with him during the night. Next morning the robber was taken to the Pasha, who told him he was 'a good child' and at once employed him as a mounted policeman, and when we passed through Varna he was head of the force. Some evil-minded people, and amongst them many of the consuls, said the bringing in the merchant was only a cunning trick to get the robber put on as policeman, so that the band might have a friend at court. Sure it is that not one

of them was ever taken prisoner or molested in any way while he was there.

These policemen have a good time of it. They receive about 300 piastres (2*l.* 15*s.*) a month, and a uniform; out of this they have to find a horse and feed it, and keep themselves. The horse they procure in this way. They hear of a good beast belonging to a Bulgar in some far-away village. Up goes the policeman, sleeps at the man's house *nolens volens*, discovers him to be in league with the brigands, and takes him prisoner. The poor fellow knows it will go hard with him if he comes before the Pasha, so offers anything he has to be let go. The horse then changes masters, and, should it not prove as good as was expected, the same trick is played on the first Giaour he meets with a better one and a swap made. Thus all the best horses in the country are owned by policemen or Zaptiehs. Then it costs him but little to keep the horse or himself either, as both live on the villagers and never pay for their keep. No one travels without a mounted guide, and, besides paying Government for this protection, one has to give a good bakshish to the man himself; so that though a Zaptieh's pay is not much, it is a post greatly coveted. It would be far better for the poor Bulgars were they allowed to protect themselves instead of having these Government ruffians let loose on them.

But to return to our narrative. Night was now drawing near, and the short twilight would soon be gone, but we were nearing the little town of Yeni Bazaar, where we were to halt for the night. Some

two hours before, Clianthe had pushed forward on his long-legged pony, a battery of pots, pans, and saddle-bags hung all round it. We now find him busy over a fire behind an old wall just outside the village, and as we come up we are greeted by a savoury odour that fills our mouths with water. In a little while the tent is pitched, beds and baggage brought in, water fetched for a wash, and we were settled in what, after our tiring ride, appears great luxury. Monsieur Misseri now comes out strong. A box is brought in which we had been told contained presents for some friends of his on the Dobrudja. It is opened just to see if the things are unbroken, and then we discover who his friends are! There swathed in hay bands lay a row of long-necked darlings that first saw the light at Epernay, under them another row from the banks of the Moselle, and another from the Rhine; then pots of jam, preserved meats, sardines, caviare, stilton cheese, and salad. Quietly, but quickly, claret cup and salad are made by the deft hands of the great man, and in half an hour we are sitting round our boxes, on which is spread a dinner fit for a king. Our repast over, we lounge on the beds or on the ground, enjoying cigarettes of the best Turkish tobacco, and sipping our black coffee, while we listen to tales of travel and adventure from the traveller, and of battles and camp life in the Crimea from our soldier comrade, till a great restless longing comes over me and is only comforted when I think that I also am beginning a life likely to have adventures in it, and that some day I too may have my tales to tell

as I sit with friends over my coffee. One more glass of the friendly bottle from the Rhine, one more cigarette, a short stroll in the misty moonlight while Georgey is clearing up and making preparations for the night, and then to bed and to sleep, lulled by a pretty French song, sung in a clear, low voice by Rideout, the gentle flapping of the tent eaves, and the chirping of ten thousand grasshoppers that surround us.

CHAPTER III.

Nocturnal visitor—Bashi-Bazouks—The Dobritzka—Rheumatism—A kick from the Devil—First peep of Kustendjie—Arrival at Kustendjie.

THIS happy state of things had lasted some two hours when we were all suddenly awoke by R. A. B. sitting up in bed and shouting out, 'What the deuce do you want, groping about and putting your fingers into my mouth? Look out, you fellows, some one is in the tent, and has tried to bone the very teeth out of my head. Where is the revolver?' A gleam of light under the tent and we saw a dark object creep out, followed in a moment by Rideout in his one boot; then three pops of the revolver and we heard, 'Oh, let me get hold of you, you prigging son of a dog!' We were all pretty wide awake when Rideout returned, and we listened to his assertion that if only both boots had stuck to his legs he would have had the ruffian by the throat; but 'a fellow can't run with only one boot on and a tooth-brush in that, and thistles up to his middle. I believe, though, it was no man, but only a dog; and if you think you are going to kick up such a row again, my friend, you had better move your bed to the lee side of the stone wall two hundred yards away.' An angry growl

in reply from R. A. B., and we are soon all asleep again. I do not say it was *not* a dog; but, if it were, it must have been a friendly one, for it brought us a Bulgar cap, which we found near R. A. B.'s bed next morning.

We were up soon after daybreak and preparing to proceed on our journey, Rideout having been persuaded to go on with us to Kustendjie. We Britishers marched off in half dress to a well close by, and gave each other a good sousing with icy cold water. We then returned to a good breakfast, and afterwards, while we were smoking our cigarettes and the men packing and striking the tent, we had a visit from the Tchorbadjie, or head man of the little town. He was a Bulgar, as were nearly all the inhabitants, and proved a quiet, decent fellow. There was a dash of melancholy in his looks, which we thought was accounted for when he told us that when the war first broke out a regiment of Bashi-Bazouks was sent up here to look after a few Cossacks who had crossed the Danube and were acting as scouts. They encamped for the night on the very spot we were just quitting, and before they left the next morning they set fire to the town, and even took the corn out of the granary, piled it up in the streets, and burnt it. Some of the young Bulgars remonstrated with them, and were at once cut down and hacked to pieces. Of the horrors the women went through I dare not write; but of one thing I feel sure, as long as there is a Sultan in Turkey, every Bulgar will curse him for having let loose such a mob of devils on them. We afterwards heard this tale corroborated by many Chris-

tians and a few Turks, though the latter tried to make the best of it. We now mounted our horses to continue our journey, and, skirting the town, we soon came in sight of the Dobrudja proper for the first time. It is a vast undulating plain, and at the time I am writing of was nearly all grass. There are not ten trees from end to end of it; and the only things to mark the way and relieve the monotony are innumerable Roman barrows, just like those that are to be found in various parts of England.

The villages are at least ten miles apart, and are some of them Turkish and some Tartar, but the greater number Bulgarian. They all consist of a miserable collection of mud hovels, clustered together for protection. Nowhere in Turkey are isolated houses to be found; for the good reason that, if there were, the owners would have their throats cut within a week. I daresay few of my readers will feel tempted by my description to settle on this plain; and yet I can assure them that not only did I learn to like it, but since I left I have at times felt almost home-sick about it, and I promise myself a real treat at some not far distant day in visiting it again.

We had come out from England at the hottest part of the year, and all the way down the Mediterranean I had been driven from my berth by the intense heat and the swarms of 'B flats,' and had slept on the open deck rolled in a rug. Possibly this may have had something to do with an attack of ague which came on directly after I arrived at Constantinople; and while

this was still flying about me I got a thorough soaking in a thunder-storm when at some steeple-chases which had been got up by the English residents. The same storm drove in my bedroom windows at Pera, and so my bed and most of my clothes got damp; but what did it matter, for was I not as strong as a horse? I found to my cost that it *did* matter, for a few days later I began to feel aches in every limb, and soon after we left Yeni Bazaar the pain was so great I had to give up my horse and get inside Neuri's araba, and it was more than a month before I could again put foot to the ground. It was not long before I had a friend in misfortune to share my araba. From the first G——'s horse had taken a vast dislike to the fiery little beast (named 'Sheitan,' *devil*) on which Rideout rode, and on the previous day had kicked him plump with both legs in the ribs. Sheitan had not forgotten or forgiven this, and only watched for an opportunity to return the compliment, so when passing in a canter he let out, intending to plant his heels in Cole-ei's ribs, but instead kicked G—— on the shin, cutting it to the bone. Mercifully, no bones were broken, for, had there been, we should have been in a nice fix. No doctor nearer than Constantinople, and he could not have got to us under a week. G—— was soon beside me in the araba with a huge pitcher of water, with which he kept constantly wetting rags and placing them on the leg. Thanks to this treatment, the wound did well, and in a few days he was able to ride and walk again. Since that time I have seen many a bad accident, and always

found that pure cold water, constantly applied to the wound from the moment it was done, worked wonders, and I believe I have seen many a limb, if not life, saved by it.

Neuri had now two Giaours at his mercy, and the ingenuity with which he managed to guide his wretched springless araba into every hole and over every rough place was quite diabolical; and I believe my Turkish career would have been here finished had not G—— adopted the plan of hitting him a crack over the head for every jolt, and so in time reducing them a little.

During the afternoon of the third day we topped a long rise, and there, about four miles before and below us, we saw Kustendjie. It was a joyful sight to us all, for we were weary and feverish, and some of us full of aches and pains; but at the same time I felt disappointed, for I had heard so much for months past of this place that my imagination had pictured it quite a grand Oriental town, instead of which I could distinguish through the clear air only a small collection of wretched mud huts with the minaret of a mosque sticking up from the midst. The village stands on a narrow neck of land which, stretching out into the Black Sea, forms an open bay on its western side. This, then, was to be my home for years! Should I ever learn to like it and be able to look back to this part of my life with pleasure? Yes, I have no misgivings, but feel sure I shall be quite happy and contented—if only I could at once have the life of that ruffian Neuri for having gone ten yards off the road to jolt us over the first stone we have seen

since we left the Varna Hill. Rattle, rattle, rattle, down this hill and the next, through the gap in Trajan's wall, in and out among the numerous barrows which cluster round the base of the promontory, past the khan, and through the market-place, and here we are on the edge of the cliff just under the mosque and between it and the sea. Here we soon have all the male portion of the village squatting round us with open mouths and dull, stupid faces, wondering at the strange beings that have come among them from 'some distant land called London, miles beyond Stamboul.' In half an hour the tent is pitched, beds arranged, boxes brought in, guns and pistols fastened round the tent-pole, and those who were sound gone off for a swim in the sea, while we poor cripples have to content ourselves with a damping from a little water poured Turkish fashion over our faces and hands. We manage to spend a merry evening, and for the last time enjoy the rollicking French songs and amusing tales of our two friends, who are to start on their return journey the next morning. The following narrative was told us by Monsieur Misseri, who heard it at Constantinople at the time of its occurrence, and I afterwards heard it repeated many times by the natives. Some years ago a small colony of Cossacks had crossed the Danube and settled at the different towns along its bank, and on the shores of the Black Sea. They had all become Rayahs, or Christian subjects of the Sultan, and were chiefly occupied as fishermen. They were a quiet, hard-working set, whose chief fault was a craving for raki. From the first the Turks

looked on them with distrust, chiefly because they came from the land of their great enemy—'the Reuss.' Whilst the Russian troops were besieging Silistria, a few Cossack light horsemen appeared on the Dobrudja. I never heard they did any harm, though the Turkish villagers were terrified at them, and the leading men of Kustendjie came to the conclusion that the old Cossack settlers might give information to the rovers and bring them down on the town, and thus pay off a lot of old scores they owed them. With as little feeling of pity or compunction as we in England would show at killing down a lot of rats, the Turks set on the poor Cossacks, who were few and unarmed, and killed them all. One man, at the commencement of the row, after having seen his wife shot down, picked up his two small boys (four and five years old), and, rushing down to the sea, jumped with them into his lumbering boat and pushed off. Alas! his escape was noticed by a ruffian named Kara Mustapha, who, when he had finished his butcher's work on shore (for he was the chief of the murderers), followed in a much lighter and quicker boat, and soon came up with his victim. He deliberately shot down the Cossack, and the same ball that killed the father broke the arm of the younger boy. Kara Mustapha did not think it worth his while to stop to kill the poor children, thinking they must inevitably be drowned or starved to death, so he left the boat to float out to sea carrying the dead man and his living children.

They drifted all the afternoon and through the long night, half-starved with cold and hunger; but fortu-

nately in the early morning they came into the track of an English man-of-war that was standing in to look out for Russian troops, and were observed by some of the watch. The children were soon brought on board and the dead man lowered into the sea. I believe I am correct in stating that the little fellows remained on Her Majesty's ship during all the war; and I know that while on her they were made the pets and playthings of the ship's company, and, dressed as Jack-tars, were as happy as the day was long.

Kara Mustapha was still living at Kustendjie only a few years back. He was a brutal-looking giant, and even among his Mussulman neighbours was looked upon as a bad lot.

CHAPTER IV.

Good-bye to friends—Turkish visitors—Exceptional years—Hard times—An affectionate pair—Coursing on the plains—Game—Water-fowl—Roman culvert—Flocks and herds—Determined bathers.

WE were up early in the morning, as our friends wished to make a long day of it, and if possible get half through their journey to Varna before night, and we who were to be left behind had to write letters to friends in England for them to post. Breakfast was over by six o'clock, and then our two travelling companions left us, and very bad we felt about it, as in all probability it would be years before we saw one of them again, and they had both been so merry and good-tempered that what would otherwise have been a weary journey was altogether a pleasure trip, and, busy as we were all day, it was impossible not to miss them. All the early part of the morning was taken up with visits from the 'Mudir,' or Governor, the chief 'Mollah,' or priest, the chief of the Zaptiehs, and then all the other leading men of the village. They all came separately, all smoked, and all drank coffee. They could not come together and so let us get over all our salaams in a lump, for each wanted something through our supposed influence, and dare not mention it before the others—

the Governor and the officials all wanted more pay, and hoped we might be able at some time to say a good word for them in Stamboul. All the others wanted to be made Governor. If only half they said of the existing one was true, he must be a hoary-headed old sinner; and if a quarter of what each said for himself was also true, here was a nest of men all fit to be Grand Viziers!

We were entreated to consider their houses and all that they had in the world as our own, and were only to ask, to have. We did ask at once for a house to hire, and then found they all belonged to Turks, and no Giaour could be allowed to live among the Children of the Prophet! So much for an Oriental's offer.

During many years of travel, I have remarked a very curious coincidence. Whenever you go to a fresh place or country, it is always an exceptional year there. Either it is extraordinarily hot, or cold, or wet, or there never were so many mosquitoes, flies, or fleas. There always is something never known before. Our visit here proved no exception to the rule; for no sooner were we settled than it turned as cold as the first days of December, and down came the rain and down it continued to come for ten days in a way quite unprecedented, for here September is generally one of the finest, hottest, and driest months of the year. A good English tent is not an over-nice home in cold and wet, and a bad Turkish one is only fit for frogs or water-snakes. Then acute rheumatism is not a nice bedfellow under such circumstances; but we had to put up with

it, for it was three weeks before we could get a room to shelter in, and then only one in a Jew's house, so small that, when the three little camp beds were opened out, they covered all the floor, and the door could not be opened. Besides this, the ceiling was only five feet from the ground, and the only window was one foot square and glazed with bladder. Another drawback to our comfort was a door with cracks one could put one's hand through, communicating with a drinking-shop kept by our Jew landlord, or landlords, for there were about half a dozen of them. Night was made hideous by the howls of the drunken beasts that frequented it to drink raki; and, do what we would in the way of stopping up cracks, we were nearly suffocated by the aniseed scented fumes, and I can never again smell aniseed without being carried back in mind to that stuffy little hovel. One night, whilst my elder brother was away, we were awakened by fearful screams, and, on pulling open one of the cracks in the door and taking a peep into the adjoining room, we saw a lusty Israelite sitting on his prostrate wife, apparently occupied in knocking out her brains with a black bottle, while a dozen other cowardly brutes sat looking on with as much indifference as if he had been hammering a stone. In a minute R—— was into his trowsers, and with a hunting crop in his hand he bolted out of our door, round the hut and into the Jew's room, and I heard one good whack, followed by a clamour of pleading, begging, whining voices, but high above all a shrill female tenor that was unmistakeably abusive. R——

was soon back, and then told me he had cracked open Master Levi's head, and thereby cowed all but the woman, who instantly was up and at him like a tigress, and, as he could not hit her, he had to beat a hasty retreat. From this it will be seen that the old saying of not interfering between man and wife holds good even as far as the shores of the Black Sea. We took one more peep through the crack, and there squatted Levi drinking a pot of raki, whilst Rebecca wept over him and bathed his cracked skull with vinegar and water.

G—— and R—— were occupied with work for the railway, and, as I could not move, I amused myself with smoking and learning Turkish from Georgey; but as he had no roof to his mouth, and spoke through his big flat nose, I fear I did not make much progress, and that my pronunciation was far from perfect. As soon as I got a little better, I used to mount Cole-ei in the afternoon, and, followed by two Persian greyhounds that had been lent us by a friendly Turk named Arif Agha, sally forth to meet my brothers returning from their work in the country, and till dark we rode over the great endless grass plains looking for hares to course. There were plenty of them, and whackers they were, some weighing up to eleven pounds. Gumesh (Silver) and Kara Kush (Blackbird) were a match for them, and we rarely returned empty handed. If we killed more than one we had to ride hard so as to get it from the dogs before it was dead, and then cut its throat, as, if we wished to give it away, no Turk would eat it unless this was done. So with the partridges we shot

and did not eat ourselves, their heads had to be nearly severed from their bodies. This I confess was often done at home when they had been dead hours, but it *looked* all proper. On these excursions we often saw great quantities of game; flocks of big bustard would rise out of shot and fly away over the first hill. On the wing they look great, clumsy, heavy fellows, but when quietly feeding on the ground they are princely birds, and somehow always remind me of a herd of deer. Then 'burr' would go a small bustard with its quick short stroke of wing and straight flight, apparently going much faster than he really is. Then a splendid covey of true English partridges that it did one good to look at. Quail were also constantly getting up, and it was evident we should not fare badly when we had time to get out with our guns. About three miles along the coast to the East are two lakes, the first comparatively small and very shallow, but just beyond that is a larger one called 'Sutgul,' or Milk Lake. This is a splendid piece of water, eight miles long and averaging four miles wide. It is only separated from the sea by low sand-hills, which are covered with a reedy sort of grass, and the surest find for a hare within miles; but, owing to the soft yielding nature of the ground and the short, steep little hillocks, it takes more than an average good dog to kill one here.

However, it was a favourite ride, first because we often found a fox on the sand-hills which the dogs could easily pick up, and secondly because there is no place in Europe we ever saw or heard of, where one could

meet with such swarms of aquatic birds. It would be better for me to copy a volume of Yarrell than attempt to name them; but among the most conspicuous were pelicans, swans, geese, mallard, teal, widgeon, both sorts of sheldrake, and scores I do not know by name. The first time I rode down to the smaller lake (it is a mile long, and about a quarter of a mile wide) I saw a black and white mass covering the face of it. I told Mehmet to fire off a pistol, and when he did so the rising of the birds looked as if a lid had been taken off the water. There must have been many thousands. There were also snipe in the marshy borders, but we afterwards found other swamps near where there were many more. The water in both these lakes is fresh; and there is no doubt the Romans brought it on to Kustendjie when they occupied that place, for to this day may be seen the remains of a culvert made of stone, and flat tiles set on edge, which runs at the foot of the sea cliff from the town to the big lake. In after years we had this culvert examined, and one of our workmen (a Durham pitman) crept down it for half a mile, but then found it smashed in by the slipping of the cliff, and in other places the sea had encroached and carried it altogether away.

Near the edge of the small lake is the little village of Anadol Kei; and it is here the leading men of Kustendjie have their 'schiftliks' or farms, and the great droves of horses and cattle and flocks of sheep give the plain a pretty and prosperous appearance. The cattle are all of one family, rather small, dun-

coloured beasts, with black faces and legs; they are very hardy, standing well the great cold of winter as well as the heat of summer. As for the horses, they are the most underbred, misshapen, runty little beasts in Europe! During all the years I was in Bulgaria, I never saw one fit to put in a tinker's cart; and I do not know what the brutes are reared for, unless it is to tread out the corn, for that is the only work I have ever seen them doing, and I never heard of anyone buying a really useful pony from these droves. However, they are little trouble, for winter and summer they feed themselves on the open plains, and there increase and multiply. They go about in droves of about thirty, with one stallion who acts as master over all, and keeps them in order. Woe betide a young lady that casts sheep's eyes towards a neighbouring drove, or a colt who wishes to enlarge his mind by an interchange of ideas with the young bloods of another family. The vicious-looking old husband and father trots quietly up to the delinquent, and either takes at one bite about a pound of solid flesh out of its neck, or gives it a kick on the hocks that reduces it to three legs for a week. I have often asked the farmers and villagers why they do not cross them with the Arab, and take a little trouble to improve the breed, but have always received the same answer, 'What would be the use of it? If they were good for anything the Government would take them for the troops, or the Government officials and police would walk off with them for their private use;' and I believe they are right. These droves of horses are allowed to

take care of themselves, as they are not worth the cost of a man to guard them, and, besides, no one would care to steal them; but it is otherwise with the cattle. These are really valuable to the villager, and each drove has a guardian who looks after them, drives them out to pasture, and either takes them three times a day to a lake, or draws water for them at the wells. Nearly all the draught work here is done by bullocks, and the ground ploughed by them. They are just the beasts for the Turk, for they never hurry, and their slow, lazy walk suits their sleepy driver to perfection. Besides these bullocks, every well-to-do Turk has a drove of water buffaloes—huge black, fierce-looking creatures, with long, flat, curved horns. Their looks greatly belie them, for they are the most quiet, good-tempered animals that man ever made a slave of. They are far more prized than the bullock, for they are much stronger, more willing (for they never sulk as the bullock does when tired), and, besides, they give more and richer milk. They are good, useful beasts, but not quite perfect for the Turk, as they require so much care; in winter they suffer greatly from the cold, and have to be shut up at night in warm stables, and even when at work have to be covered up with rugs from head to tail. Again in summer they are wretched when out of water, and must have a good blow-out about every hour; their hides crack if the sun shines very hot upon them, and they have to be plastered all over with mud to prevent this. Only let them get to water, the muddier the better, and they are quite happy, and grunt and roll about in it for hours. They can waddle through

the deepest morass, can swim for miles, and can float well out of the water, or sink themselves under till nothing but their damp, black noses are above, and in this position will sleep for hours.

I once saw a dignified old Turk driving his wife in an araba drawn by a pair of these buffaloes approach a small, deep lake over a steep bank. The day was broiling hot, and it was as much as the poor beasts could do to drag them up the hill, and they quite staggered along; but no sooner did they see the water than off they set at a lumbering trot, and there was no stopping them. Out jumped the Turk in front, out jumped his wife behind. The man whacked them on their snouts, and the woman poured down abuse on them, reviling their mother, their sisters, and their father, but it was no good; on they went through the slushy marsh flop into the lake, and then, after drinking enough to float a gunboat, quietly composed themselves to sleep, with the araba full of the Turk's bedding and other things floating behind them. This was about 11 A.M., and when I repassed on the same road at 4 P.M. they were still in the same position, and Mr. and Mrs. Turk quietly sitting on the shore waiting till they should think fit to come out.

CHAPTER V.

Sheep and shepherds—Frozen to death—The Bishop—Cole-ei and Kar Yardi—Turkish management of horses.

NEARLY all the sheep on the Dobrudja either belong to Bulgars or are shepherded by them. I take it the reason is that the sheep is such a poor, feckless creature, so prone to get the fly in its jacket, or a panic in its stupid head, and to be eaten by wolves and dogs, that the constant care and watching required by them is too trying for the do-nothing lazy Turk, and so they fall to the lot of the more stirring and energetic Bulgar. They are a poor breed, in appearance something like our Welsh sheep, but smaller, and their mutton is beastly to eat, tasting like concentrated essence of goat, and as tough as leather. Vast flocks are fed on these plains, and those that are not eaten as lambs find their way to Constantinople and the islands of the Levant. A poor sort of cheese is made from the sheep's milk, and forms one of the chief articles of food for all classes. Besides these native flocks, large numbers were brought down from Transylvania to be pastured here. They paid Government for the right of pasture on crossing the Danube, and these also all found their way eventually to Constantinople.

I believe the Transylvanian shepherd is one of the toughest and most enduring creatures on earth. He spends years on these plains, and during all the time never sleeps in a house. Summer and winter he is clothed in sheep-skins, which he shapes into trowsers and coat for himself, and on a cold day he looks like a gigantic old ram on its hind legs. There are three or four men with each flock, accompanied by a donkey to carry their extra sheep-skins and their pots and pans. They are followed by half a dozen big, handsome dogs, with no tails, as fierce as lions, and I have known two of these make an end of an old wolf. What a dreary life these shepherds must lead! Not only do they suffer hardships, but they have no sort of amusement. From year's end to year's end they never speak to a woman, and rarely to a man, for they cannot speak Turkish, and are not encouraged in the villages by either Turk or Bulgar, as they are looked upon as intruders brought into the country for the profit of the Sultan. Let us hope they have but little more mind than their sheep, or their life must be most wretched. A friend of mine was posting through Moldavia some winters ago, and had been journeying all night. The cold was intense, somewhere about 20° below zero. Soon after daybreak he saw a flock of sheep lying about near the side of the road, with a shepherd wrapped in his skins among them. There was an uncanny look about them all that induced him to stop and send his driver to see if anything was amiss, and he then discovered that both

sheep and shepherd were dead, frozen to blocks as hard as if they had been cut out of wood.

After we had been some days at Kustendjie we made a startling discovery. We had two Armenian grooms, one of whom we had hired just before starting from Varna. He turned out a lazy, cringing, good-for-nothing fellow, and could only have been created to consume raki (which he did by the gallon), and so do a little good in the world by drinking what might poison better men. He dare not go near the horses, and, when he was forced to hold one, looked about as happy as a swell young bachelor with a two-months' child in his arms. He was therefore employed on odd jobs, such as going messages and sweeping out the yard, and on Sunday morning, while doing the latter work, he came cringing and salaaming to G——, and asked him if he was aware of the fact that he was a Protestant clergyman! G—— said, 'I am very glad to hear it, as now I shall not hesitate to make you work all day, as Sunday is the day our clergy work hardest.' He was at once named 'the bishop,' and the title stuck by him all the time he was with us. Over and over again I have asked some Christian of the Levant what church or sect he belonged to, and he has answered, 'What be you, sare? me be all the same as you.' Protestants might be made here by thousands at half-a-crown a head!

This account of our life on the Dobrudja would be incomplete if I neglected to give a short description of our two horses, Cole-ei and Kar Yardi, the former name

being Turkish for 'dun,' and the latter for 'snow streaked.' And yet to say that Cole-ei was what we call 'dun' in English would be a great libel on him. He was a beautiful mixture of dun, chestnut, and bay, and his coat always had a sheen on it that it would have puzzled even the brush of Rosa Bonheur to depict. He had been foaled somewhere in Central Asia, his sire a pure Arab, and his dam nearly so. He was well up to 14 stone, and as beautiful as a picture. He was a thorough little swell, and a rollicking one too. No one ever saw him down in the mouth; and, though he would have liked a life of fun and amusement, yet, when pushed to it, he could go through the hardest and roughest work, and put up cheerfully with the poorest of fare. He had one fault. He was an inveterate lady-killer, and no amount of work could drive the fair sex out of his head. Then he could not endure a rival, and in his eyes every other horse was such. I can see him now coming in over the plain after a fifty-mile journey with his head well up, and his hind legs well under him, with a jaunty, light step that carries him and his rider over the rough roads at five miles an hour in a walk. He has a vivid imagination, for he espies a buffalo feeding three miles off, and first of all fancies it a possible beauty of his own species, and then a rival. He first neighs out a call of love, but quickly changes his note and sends forth a challenge, and at the same time shifts from his easy, swinging walk into a war-dance, which he keeps up till the black spot in the distance is left far behind him. Ah, Cole-ei! you were a little

too much of an aristocrat for this sort of life, and one could not help feeling, whilst riding you on a long journey, that you were out of place. You should have belonged to some fair young English beauty, and never been ridden except for her amusement and your own.

Kar Yardi was of a different stamp; he had no great beauty about him, and was not of the 'swell' type. He was a thorough-going workman. Like Cole-ei, he had Arab blood in him, as all good horses in Turkey have, but he did not show much. He had a long body, short legs, and never carried much flesh, and there was a raffish look all over him. He was the best tempered beast in the world, both to man and horse, in the stable and out of it, and I don't believe he could show vice; but I suppose perfection is not to be found in any horse, and Kar Yardi had one fixed idea, which was to pull at his rider's hands from morning till night. He would run away in a walk, and when once off in a gallop there was no stopping him. I must have ridden him thousands of miles, and I can safely say he was all the time running away with me! It is a fact, strange as it may appear, that a few years later he became the property of a lady, and with her on his back he never pulled an ounce, though if she lent him to a man he bolted directly he was on him. In spite of this, he never got himself or his rider into difficulties, for he was as nimble on his legs as a roe deer, and would jump a five-barred gate with ease. Both horses became passionately fond of coursing, and I believe would have turned away from the stable-door

after a fifty-mile journey for a gallop after the greyhounds.

While on the subject of horses, let me say a few words upon their management by the Turks. First of all, a Turk never is wantonly cruel to any beast. He never strikes or spurs a horse in a rage, and all his movements are so quiet and collected that a horse soon forgets all fear with him, and to find a restive horse is rare indeed. Pullers are very common, and most Turkish horses have bad mouths owing to their being ridden with severe bits from the time they are first mounted. This will always be so, for it is 'the custom,' and it is as hard to get a Turk to change a custom as an Englishman!

A Turk never rides fast, and his favourite pace on a long journey is either a jog or a tripple; the latter is preferred, as it is faster and much easier to the rider. Whenever he passes water, winter or summer, he lets his horse drink as much as it wants; but, when he has done so, he rides it on fast at once—he never lets it stand still after drinking. If possible, he gives it its fill of water half an hour before the end of its journey. Directly he dismounts he loosens the girths, and then leads the horse about till it is quite cool. It is then put in the stable with the saddle on, and this is not taken off for an hour or more. When this is done, and when he has had water on his way home, he never 'breaks out,' and never refuses his feed of barley. Hay is unknown in Turkey, except in the shape of green grass, and this is not often used. In its place the

horse gets chopped wheat straw, and I may say I have never seen horses in better condition; and in the thirteen years I was in Turkey I never knew but one that was broken-winded, and that was one of my own that I had been feeding on hay for a month. The horses have no bed to lie on, except in grand stables, where the manure is all collected, dried to powder in the sun, and then spread under the horse at night. This is not done for the comfort of the horse, but to make his coat shine, which it does to perfection. A Turk despises a mare, and nearly always rides a stallion. The latter are such inveterate fighters that the groom never dares to leave the stable, and always sleeps by the side of his horse. It is a British prejudice, and a very cruel one, not to let a horse drink when he is thirsty; and if any of my readers have a horse that does not feed when he comes in from a day's hunting, let him try the Turkish plan; or, if he is selling his horse cheap for this fault, let him drop me a line, as I think we might 'conclude a deal.'

CHAPTER VI.

Start for Tchernavoda—Trajan's wall—Tartar town—Crossing a brook—Moldavian settlers—Farm-house—Unsavoury fuel—The Vlatt family.

OUR work at Kustendjie was finished by the end of September, and we were now to move on to Tchernavoda (Black Water), on the Danube, about forty miles distant. We left the tent and some of our things to be in readiness for a fresh campaign in the spring, and then on a lovely fine autumn day started on our journey. For the first twenty miles we kept close to that most wonderful monument of Roman enterprise, the wall of the Emperor Trajan. Beginning in the Bay of Kustendjie, it runs up hill and down dale in nearly a straight line for forty-five miles, till it cuts the Danube at Rassova, thus forming the base of a triangle, the two other sides of which are the Danube and Black Sea. It is formed of a ditch twelve feet deep and twenty wide at the top, the earth from which is thrown up in a steep bank on the edge of the ditch, and slopes easily down on the other face for forty feet, till it reaches the edge of another small ditch the parapet of which has at one time been a huge wall formed of rough-hewn stones weighing from one ton to six tons.

These have all been displaced, I suppose, by the various inhabitants of the Dobrudja, and now lie higgledy-piggledy one over the other, and the spaces between them are filled up with earth. About twenty-five miles from Kustendjie we come upon the new town of Medjidier, which is occupied by a colony of Tartars, the *avant couriers* of the thousands soon to arrive from the Crimea. It is placed on the south side of the first of a series of lakes and swamps which extend from here to within three miles of Tchernavoda, and by the side of which our road leads us.

We had all the day before us, so did not make an early start, and then we loitered by the way, making many a divergence to look at the lay of the land, course a hare or inspect a flock of wild fowl, or an eagle sitting on the side of the hills; so it was night and nearly dark when we reached the narrow valley leading into the village, and we found we had either to wade our horses through the muddy brook that lay between us and it, or ride over the bridge. You will say there could not be much choice, and there was not. I would rather have attempted to ford the Thames at Eton than have ventured over that frail erection that spanned the brook. It was formed of two trees laid parallel across, and then a lot of loose poles lying on them through which a horse's leg might step at every yard. We were not to get through, however, without one of us getting a ducking; for, when Kar Yardi had drunk as much as he desired, it struck him he might as well have a bath, and like a shot over he went on

his side, and R—— had only time to save a roll with him by jumping up to his knees in the water. A shout of 'Kayia, Kayia!' soon brought out the head man of the village, and our servants, who had arrived before us, and we were conducted through a pack of yelping dogs to the house of a Moldavian named Vlatt, from the door of which we could just distinguish the great highway into Europe gliding quietly by at the end of the valley half a mile away. The village is built on the slope of the hill on the right side of the valley, and consists of about fifty houses, half of which belong to Moldavians who have been settled here for years and have become Rayahs; they are a peaceable, easy going, merry, raki-drinking people, not much troubled with morals, but superior in most other respects to their Turkish neighbours. They are all of them farmers, prosperous and well to do; and so they deserve to be, for from sunrise to sunset men, women, and children are incessantly busy. They build their own houses, make their own carts and farming implements, and, except a few common Manchester handkerchiefs which the girls wear, all the clothes, from the sheep-skin hats to the cow-hide mocassins, are made at home. All, except the very old women, speak Turkish; but we did not discover this for some time, as the girls pretended they did not understand it at first, and it only came out when they had learnt to trust us. The houses are all made of hurdle-work plastered inside and out with mud and cowdung, and roofed in by a great thickness of reeds, which keeps them cool in summer and warm

in winter. They are beautifully clean; and I would rather live in one of them than in even a bettermost English peasant's cottage, with its cold, damp floor, draughty windows and doors, and miserable little fire-place. All the houses are made on the same model. You enter through a room which is only used as a passage. On the right hand is a door leading down a few wooden steps into the room where all the family live and all the household work is done. This room is sunk in the earth up to the ceiling, the arched rafters of which rest on the ground. The walls are the natural earth plastered smooth, and in it are scooped out many a recess as cupboard, where the household gods are stowed away. At one end is a great open hearth, and on the other a small window in the gable. The thick reed thatch is covered all over with earth, and one would not distinguish it from a natural mound were it not for the low hedge placed round it. To the left of the entrance is a good-sized room above ground, which is rarely entered by the family except to clean, and is of about as much use as the 'best parlour' used to be in some of our old-fashioned English farms. This room is heated by a mud stove in the shape of a huge beehive, which is fed from a hearth in the entrance room through a hole in the wall. A divan runs round two sides of it, at the ends of which are piled up great stacks of home-made sheets and coverlids. The entire room is plastered with mud, even to the divan. The walls are whitened with marl, picked out with a few fancy stars and lines near the ceiling and round the

windows. This room was at once made over to us, and during the month we were now in it we were most comfortable, and for years after we looked on it as our Danube home, and could drop into it whenever we liked.

We were chilly from our ride, so on our first arrival were shown into the underground room, as there was no fire in the other, and we were glad to draw round the hearth and warm ourselves by a good fire made of—dare I mention it!—cowdung. Yes; and not only did we warm ourselves at this, to me, disgusting fuel, but—horror of horrors!—the housewife now proceeds to make us a damper cake and roast it on the hearth in this burning filth! I have fallen very low since I left the paternal roof some few months ago; I have given up knives and forks and taken to fingers; I have munched with a relish black bread and huge onions; I have shared one mug with half a dozen others, and I am prepared for even worse than this; but eat damper cooked in dung I never will, so give me a cup of coffee and a cigarette and I will sup on them. 'Very well, do as you like,' says G——, with his mouth full; 'I have no doubt your stomach will not be so proud in the morning, so I shall put your share by your bedside.' He was thoughtful, he was kind, and he was right. There was none left by 7 A.M. next morning. The Vlatt family consisted of Father Vlatt, Mother Vlatt, three grown-up sons, a son's wife, and two daughters, Maria and Rhoda, both of them beauties in their way, who, from the way they cast their eyes on the Britishers, evidently

thought themselves irresistible. Perhaps when one gets used to bare legs and feet, the latter as broad as they are long and as rough as nutmeg-graters, when one has got used also to the odour of garlic that exudes from every inch of them, and when one has been in these wilds for years without seeing another woman, I shall succumb. Then it won't look badly in the *Times*: 'On the 1st inst., at Tchernavoda, by the Rev. Juan Popa, H. C. B., to Rhoda, daughter of Baba Vlatt, landowner, and mayor of the village.' Well, there is no knowing what one may come to; I did not think last night I should be eating damper cooked in cow-dung!

CHAPTER VII.

Troubled night—Danube—A swaggering young Turk—Native dance—Domestic life—A birth—Corn-magazine—Wolves.

THE next day being Sunday, we were all glad to take an extra snooze, especially as we had not made much of a night. The dogs had been distracting, especially one great yellow beast that squatted just under our window and barked steadily on for several hours, till I got infuriated and rushed out with a stick, after which he barked *un*steadily at me (through the keyhole I believe) for hours more. Besides the dogs, there was another enemy to sleep whose acquaintance I now made for the first time—the mosquitoe—the greatest scourge to beast and man ever sent on earth. But as there were not many I will pass over them for the present, and mention them farther on when they are about me in millions.

After breakfast we took a stroll down to the Danube, which is here a mile wide and looks a noble river, in spite of its water being as thick as peasoup. Looking up the valley from the hills above Tchernavoda, the river is kept within bounds on the Turkish side by bold limestone cliffs; whereas the Wallachian shore is a low, flat plain, inundated by the Danube when the

water is high, but at this season covered with rank grass and reeds, and cut up and intersected by innumerable dry channels left by the receding flood. The cliffs are covered with scrubby bushes and various kinds of creepers, conspicuous among which at this season of the year are the red leaves of the wild vine and the feathery clematis. It is a pretty, peaceful scene we gaze on, this clear autumn Sunday morning, and we cannot help thinking what a splendid country this might be made under a good and just government. But as we cannot alter this, and have nothing to do, we may as well lounge on the top of the hill, and, whilst we chat of friends far away, admire the beauties of nature and forget the corruption brought on them by man. Later on we take a walk along the Danube till we are arrested by the little river that runs down the valley, and which we had forded opposite the village last night. We are greeted from the other side by a party of young Turks, the leader of whom, half out of stupidity, half out of his hatred and contempt for the Giaour, does his best to insult us, rendered pretty safe from our retaliating in the only way he fears, namely, with our fists, by the river separating us. He lolls out his tongue, makes faces at us, and calls us 'Bono Johnnies,' and, encouraged by the grins of his companions, proceeds to vile abuse, and struts and swaggers as if he were master of all creation. We take no notice, but quietly walk off in the direction of the village, as if we did not mind him; but, when arrived there, we go direct to the lodgings of Issa Effendi, a Turkish Bin

Bashi who had been sent from Stamboul to help us in our dealings with the villagers, and we lay the matter before him. He quietly gives orders to two Zaptiehs to fetch in the chief delinquent, and another he despatches to cut a good tough stick from the hill side. In half an hour the young swaggerer is shown into the room, and it is ludicrous to see what a different creature he has become in this short time. He is over six feet high, and, as the room is a foot too low for him, he has to stand with his head thrust forward on his chest and a most deprecating expression on his face. In a few words Issa explains matters to him, and then, ordering him out into the yard, gives him with his own hands a proper rubbing down. We drink a coffee with the Bin Bashi and then return home, and are greatly amused to see how high we have risen in the estimation of all those we pass, and the respect shown us.

All the young Moldave men and maidens are gathered together on the flat space in front of our door, and are engaged in the only dance known here, called the Khora. They hold hands in a ring, walk three steps round, halt and stamp, and then lurch and step inwards and back, and then the first three steps again, and so on for hours. They all look solemn and never speak, but at intervals the men give a howl like a hungry hyæna. I suppose there is great fun in this if one could but see it, for all Sundays and saints' days are devoted to it, and there is no other sort of amusement. While the young ones are dancing, the

elders sit about smoking their pipes, and on great days drink raki.

They have no church of any sort at this village, and, as far as I could make out, no ideas on religion beyond keeping a lamp burning before a daub of some saint, not working when the priests tell them it is a saint's day, and sticking up the skulls of cows on the fences round their houses to scare away the evil eye. This last practice is common to all the people of Turkey, Christian or Mussulman, and from the highest to the lowest all take some such precaution. On the Monday morning we were all astir early, and I got out in time to see the numerous cows and bullocks of the village winding their way among the houses and gardens down to their usual rendezvous, the brook, where, after they have satisfied their thirst, they are driven off to pasture by the herdsman.

The young men either go off to the fields to plough, or yoke the oxen to their carts and start for the forests miles away to fetch home the winter fuel.

The father of the family (a pipe a foot long in his mouth), with the help of his axe and a few other rough tools, works away making or repairing his bullock carts or farm implements. The two girls retire to an underground shed close by, and there grind away at the hand mill, and afterwards sift and prepare the flour for the day's use. Mother Vlatt and her daughter-in-law meantime milk the cows, roll up the beds, light the fires, sweep out the house, feed the fowls, and when there is nothing else to do, start to work to plaster

some part of the house with mud. As in England a good housewife takes up her needle or knitting whenever she is short of work, so the Moldavian and Bulgar women under the same circumstances either twirl off wool with their fingers from the distaff, or 'go a-plastering.' I was busy writing in our room a few days after our arrival, and the daughter-in-law was hard at work plastering the floor of the verandah outside my window. Presently she stopped, stretched herself, gave a yawn, and retired to the other room, leaving her pail of mud where she was at work. In about half an hour she returned and finished her job, and, a small squeak being heard, she complacently said, 'Oh, that is my new baby; it is just born, and now wants feeding!' The curse on Eve for apple-picking falls lightly on these people, and Sarah Gamp and Mrs. Harris would not make much of a living here. I afterwards heard that a child, directly it is born, is well rubbed over with salt, a picture of a saint hung round its neck, and then from head to foot it is swathed in bandages, which for the first year are only removed from time to time to wash it. During all this while the poor little wretch is not able to move so much as a finger, much less kick its legs about. Yet they *do* grow up, and, from the specimens I have seen, appear a fine healthy race.

We wanted some corn for our horses, so applied to old Vlatt. He hesitated a little, and then said, 'Very well; I will open the granary, only you must not betray where it is.' He at once commenced digging in the middle of the path at the front door, and in a few

minutes fished up a big flat stone, beneath which was a shaft some three feet deep and just big enough to admit a small boy, which led into a large room excavated out of the dry earth. He assured us the corn kept well for years in these holes; and certainly what he fished up for us looked hard, bright, and good. Friend Vlatt does not intend that the Bashi-Bazouks should burn his corn when they visit his village, nor does he mean to feed Zaptiehs' horses for nothing. I believe our living with them was a great boon to all the family—first, because we paid for all we had; and secondly, because, as we were there, the brutal Zaptiehs dare not molest them.

Among the plagues of Bulgaria are the wolves which infest all parts of the country. They conceal themselves all day in the great reed beds on the sides of the lakes, and in the brushwood by the river, but at night they prowl about the villages and pick up any stray animal. Their favourite food is a small dog or a puppy, and often while snug in bed I have shuddered to hear the piteous yelping of some poor little beast being carried off to the hills. Old Vlatt told us that two buffaloes had been killed that year by these cunning brutes in a most ingenious manner. The herdsman had neglected on two occasions to collect all his drove; directly it was dark the wolves set on the straggler. Now, a buffalo is a tough customer, and in an ordinary way would be somewhat difficult to kill, but not so to the wolves. They quietly drove the doomed animal to the edge of the cliffs, and there brought it to bay. By

flying at its nose they drove it backwards over the precipice, and then jogged quietly down and picked its bones clean. I had heard fearful tales in my childhood of the ferocity of wolves, but I must confess I never heard of a man being killed by them in Turkey. Now and again I heard of a man having been found half eaten, but I believe he had died or been killed before the wolves began on him, or he had been so drunk he could not help himself. Besides, the dogs of Turkey would not object to eating a dead man, so it is possible their deeds were sometimes put to the score of the wolves. I have seen a pack of twenty wolves together, and this in extreme cold when they must have been hard pressed with hunger, but they have always skedaddled directly they saw me.

CHAPTER VIII.

Start for Varna—Lost in a snowstorm—Unfriendly reception—Turkish hospitality—A Persian greyhound—English friends at Varna—Shooting—'Jack Frost' and his victims.

As winter would now soon be upon us, we made our arrangements to start for Varna, and set off on November 5, intending to do the journey in three days. It was quite fine when we started, and we looked forward with pleasure to our trip down; but 'man proposes,' &c. We on horseback could easily do a little coursing and shooting by the way, and yet keep up with the arabas, and in the Mahmoud valley we were tempted even to stop there for an hour whilst we made a raid upon the partridges, which literally swarmed. Then we made ourselves hungry at this work, and thought it just as well to stop for lunch, and rest and feed the horses at the village. Stop we did, and had a long chat with the old Turk that was head man, and so wasted precious time. It began to turn very cold and looked very stormy soon after we were again in our saddles; but as Ibrahim, one of the araba drivers, was supposed to know the road or track as well as 'the palm of his hand,' and assured us it was quite straight to Hassan Keui, where we were to

sleep, we set off at a brisk canter for that village, leaving the arabas and men to follow.

Just before dark we arrived at forked roads, one branching slightly to the right, the other bearing to the left, and one as bad as the other. There was no choice, and we drifted down the right one. As we did so it began to snow, and soon the ground was covered, and by the time it was dark the road was lost and so were we! But, by keeping the wind on our right shoulders and struggling on, we hoped to hit off the village in time. On and on we went, and worse and worse we fared. The two poor greyhounds were soon so numb with cold that they could not follow, and their pitiful howls as we rode on and left them by the roadside were too much for us, and we returned and took them up on the saddles in front of us. Now an ordinary dog is not exactly a handy thing to carry on horseback; but a big greyhound, on a dark night in a snowstorm, when your road is lost, is, to say the least, an encumbrance. At first we made rather a joke of this adventure, and told tales of how the French, in the retreat from Moscow, killed their horses and got inside them, and wished ours were a little bigger and more roomy; but gradually we became more and more silent as we rode on and on in single file, and then after hours of struggling we threw up the sponge and fairly gave in. We got off our horses, stamped about and clapped our nearly frozen hands, and then began searching for some sort of sticks or rough grass to make a fire with if possible. Whilst doing this I wandered to the top of a small hill, and

there, not far in front of us, was a glimmer of light! We were on our horses and up to a wretched hut in a few moments. We knocked at the door, but were told from the inside there was no room for us, and that it should not be opened for the Padishah himself. 'Is there another house near?' 'No.' 'Isn't there a village near here?' 'Yes.' 'In which direction?' 'Find out;' and then a laugh from three or four men. What was to be done! We could not face the bleak, open, snow-covered plain again when shelter was within six inches of our noses, and to force ourselves in upon a lot of strange men, perhaps a band of robbers, was not a pleasant alternative, but there was no other. 'Get down, boys; take out your pistols and be ready to back me up.' So down we tumbled, and the next moment down went the door from a charge of G——'s shoulder, and there we stood before four strapping young Turks, who were scrambling to their feet with anything but a friendly look on their faces. 'We are Englishmen, and must have shelter for the night, and have it we will, if we have to shoot you for it; so, my friends, you had better make the best of us.'

There was a whisper among them, and then they assured us the long-looked-for village of Hassan Keui was close by. 'Tey—— over there,' with a sweep of the hand that took in half the earth and the waters under the earth. 'Close by?' 'Yes, within ten minutes' ride.' 'So much the better for you, young fellow, for you must show us the way there, and shall have twenty piastres when you have done so; if you don't come at

once, or run away when outside, I will shoot you; so now start off.'

This sort of persuasion, backed by the sight of three revolvers, was unanswerable, so in a few moments we were following our guide, and in an hour (his ten minutes!) he landed us within sight of the village and got his twenty piastres. To the usual call of 'Kayia' came out the head man and listened to our tale, and, in answer to our inquiries about our men and arabas, said they had not arrived, and it was evident from his manner that he thought them a myth. He took us to a miserable, dirty little room opening out of a stable, where we found half a dozen Turks squatted round the fire, and from our host downwards I never saw a more insolent set. We could not have the room to ourselves, we could not go near the fire, we could have nothing but black bread (and very good fare too for Giaours), and we could have no barley for our horses. As there were by this time about fifty armed Turks staring in at us, there was nothing to be done; so we did the best we could for the horses, gave the greyhounds part of our black bread, and then sat down and smoked and listened to the half-insolent remarks passed upon us. But here comes another tormentor swaggering and pushing in at the door. Thank God, it is our Cavass Mehmet, and to see his face of horror at finding his 'tchellabies' (gentlemen) not sitting in the place of honour, but treated in this manner, was really as good as a play! He turned to the door and summoned his fellow Cavass Sali, and then drawing his yataghan, a nice little trifle two feet

in length, began laying about him with the flat side of it, till the room was speedily cleared. That's it, Mehmet; swagger all you like, the more you do so the better, and here comes Sali to help you. And they *did* swagger! They swaggered corn for our horses, eggs, butter, milk, cheese, youatt (curds), and honey for us, and the head man on his knees at our feet with a basin of water for us to wash. We had soon feasted and were tucked up in our camp beds, Mehmet and Sali, wrapped in their capotes, sleeping just outside in the stable to protect us, and very snug we felt as we listened to the storm beating against the window, and thought of the night of misery, or worse, that we had so narrowly escaped.

The storm was still raging when we awoke next morning, and we at once determined to remain where we were rather than venture farther and perhaps fare worse. We were soon on friendly terms with our old Turkish host, who, now that he had discovered who we were, was very civil, and proved a very decent old fellow. We were greatly amused with a jolly, knowing-looking little jackdaw that chattered to us and hopped about the room without the least fear. Our host told us the bird was made use of when shooting foxes in the following manner. A sportsman carries it with him to the forest and hides himself at the edge of some open space; he then holds it by the tip of its wing, which it thinks a great indignity, and holloas and croaks with all its might. If there are any foxes near, they will come creeping out to see what this strange noise is, and then (should the old Turkish flint lock go off, which it does

about once in three attempts) the fox is killed, and its skin stripped off and sold at the next fair for twenty piastres (4*s*.) Besides the jackdaw, we made friends with the most beautiful Persian greyhound, named Caplan (Tiger). She was black, tan and white, beautifully feathered on the hind legs and tail, with a coat as soft as satin. She evinced the most friendly disposition towards us, and I never saw a dog I coveted more. Fancy our delight, therefore, when starting next day to find her fastened to the araba, and at being asked by the old Turk as a favour to accept her. She turned out to be a first-rate dog, and was for years a great pet with us all.

We now had a wretched journey on with snow and mud up to our girths; but we ploughed through it somehow, and, after sleeping one more night on the road, reached Varna in safety, and at once repaired to the house of an English friend who was settled there for the winter with his wife, child, and English servant-maids. We were road-weary and way-stained, and I shall never forget what a luxury it was to have a good 'clean up' in a nice English-looking room before a good fire, with English baths and cans of hot water. I was very glad also to have a look at myself once more, for I had not had a peep in a looking-glass for more than two months, at which time only an incipient down showed on my upper lip. As far as moustache was concerned, the result was pleasing, though from the feel of it I had expected it to be somewhat longer and thicker. But did anyone ever see such a beard! It

was like an old shoe-brush covered with fluffy bristles, very patchy, and no two hairs growing in the same direction! However, it was soon floating in the bath, and then once more I could feel a little self-respect as I looked in the glass. After a good dinner, actually eaten with knives and forks, and sitting on chairs at a table, we enjoyed another treat, only appreciated to the fullest extent by travellers in wild countries. We found a bundle of English letters and papers that it would take some days to get through, and when once these were in our hands I fear our host and hostess extracted but little conversation from us.

It was settled that after a few days' rest G—— should proceed to Constantinople, where he had business to transact, and that we youngsters should avail ourselves of the kind invitation of our friends here to remain with them till the spring, when we were again to go up to Kustendjie. Between November 1 and 15 there is always a great storm in the Black Sea, and, owing to the fact that most of the fish at that time retire to deep water, it is called 'Bolluk Fortuna,' or Fish Storm. This was now over, and the most perfect weather set in, which lasted till New Year's Day. We did not waste much time in resting after our rough journey; but day after day during the first week we walked and rode about Varna and all the surrounding neighbourhood, making ourselves familiar with the habits and manners of the inhabitants, and seeking out the likeliest spots for game. And now our sport began. From this time till March 9, R—— and I missed but

one day going out shooting (Sundays excepted). We were urged to this, first by our great love of sport, and secondly because our hostess found it very difficult to cater for so many mouths in a place like Varna. For some weeks in the depth of winter it was only with great trouble we could get meat, fish, fowls, or vegetables, and it was just at such times that it was most difficult to find game. We had many a long day's trudge, and not unfrequently returned with empty bags; but the prospect of short commons would start us the next morning with renewed vigour. Hares were always our *pièces de resistance*, and if possible we secured one or two of them the first thing in the morning, and then turned our attention to such delicacies as duck, snipe, bustard, and partridges. When we had killed a good bag, and made the larder safe for a while, we would devote a day to visiting the numerous foxes' earths, accompanied by a little Bedlington terrier that had been sent out to us; and many a cunning old fox or wild cat was bolted by him and shot by us. We always stripped off their skins, and before the winter was over we had enough to carpet a room, and for many a winter after they stood between us and 'Jack Frost.' Yes, he was 'Jack Frost' in England! A fine, cheery, jovial fellow that tweaked your nose when he met you on the doorstep on Christmas morning, and did all he could to make you run home from church later on in the day; but here in Turkey we soon learnt to treat him with respect if not dread, and he became 'Frost Effendi.' A trip across Europe had quite changed him, and he

became a vicious, cruel tyrant that day and night never left one alone for a moment. The tweak of the nose was exchanged for a nip that threatened to deprive you of that feature altogether, and, instead of a friendly race home from church with him, one was obliged to bury oneself up out of sight under sheep-skins and furs to avoid being maimed or even killed by this Turkish monster. As usual, this being our first winter here, it proved an exceptional one. There had not been such a snowstorm for years as set in on New Year's Eve, and lasted three days. It was accompanied by a gale from the N.E., and the thermometer rapidly fell to zero, and in a few days was 12° below that. The snow was like powder, and came drifting off the table-lands above Varna in a blinding cloud. Soon the trees on the slope of the hills were all buried out of sight, and the drifts were so deep even in the town that we could not get into the next street without plunging through snow up to our necks. For weeks after we heard each day of fresh mishaps; dead men were brought in daily, frozen as hard as ice. A baker one morning on going to his oven, which opened into the main street, found a poor wretch in it frozen to death (probably he had crept in while there was still a little warmth in the oven), and a Greek mother and infant were found frozen in bed together.

The Pasha of Varna had some time before this sent orders to a distant village for a supply of wood. Five arabas, each with a Bulgar driver, arrived at dusk just as the storm commenced. They inquired where they

should deliver the wood; but no one knew exactly where the wood stack had better be made, and the Pasha's servants, fearing if it were discharged at the wrong place that they should have to remove it themselves, determined to do nothing till the morning. The arabas were therefore escorted into a large barrack-yard surrounded with high walls, and there locked in for the night. The cries and shouts for help from the five men were disregarded, and no further notice was taken of them till the next morning, when they were found huddled together in the snow, all dead! 'No matter, they were Bulgar dogs, and it was Kismet.' No one was punished, the wood was not paid for; but payment for the keep of the wretched bullocks was extorted from the friends of the dead men when they came to fetch them away a month later. Look out, 'Sick Man,' you are getting weaker every day, and these 'dogs' are waxing stronger; they will turn and worry you before long, and, when that day comes, who will care to drive them from their lawful prey?

CHAPTER IX.

The big bustard—Wild swans—A walk of a hundred and twenty miles—Capture and escape of Deli Mehmet—Expansive properties of dough—Chain armour—At Tchernavoda again—Breaking-up of the ice—Staking out the railroad.

On the second day of the snowstorm R—— and I sallied forth as usual with our guns, and we had not got far from the town when we saw flock after flock of the big bustard drifting on their heavy wings before the storm. In some of these flocks there must have been three or four hundred birds, but, Varna lying in such a deep valley, they nearly all passed over us far out of shot. We succeeded, however, in bringing one down, and on reaching home we weighed it and found it to weigh twenty-five English pounds. This was far the largest bustard I ever saw, and probably it was its great weight and old age that made it fly low enough for us to shoot it. I afterwards weighed many others, and I believe the average weight of a mature bird is about sixteen pounds. They are of little value for the table, the flesh being dry and hard, and tasting like inferior hare, but they vary much according to age. It is always difficult to get near the bustards, as they feed on some open space well away from cover, and will rise

at three hundred yards from a man on foot. The plan we adopted when we found a flock feeding was for one of us to hide down wind, while the other walked round and showed himself on the other side, when the birds would fly over the concealed gun, and in this way I have often bagged right and left. If they were on a plain where there was no cover in which to hide, the one intending to shoot them would lie down flat on his back with his gun by his side, and then jump up as the birds came near to him. We also killed a great many by hiding in some dip between the hills, and watching for the flocks to pass over.

There is a belief in England that the bustard is easily killed with greyhounds. I never saw one thus taken, and should myself as soon think of catching crows in the same manner. I often asked the natives if they had ever heard of its being done, and only once had an answer in the affirmative. A shepherd told me that during a storm, in which the rain froze as it fell, he came upon a flock of bustards so covered with ice that they could not rise, and his dogs killed nearly all of them.

Varna lake was soon covered with ice a foot thick, except in a few places where warm land springs entered it. These open places were always covered with mallard and various other breeds of duck, which were easily killed, but they had such a strong fishy flavour we could not eat them. We also here shot lots of wild swan. They were useless for the table, being hard and rank, but we were very glad to get them for the sake

of their down. We nailed the skins on a board and then plucked off all the feathers, under which was the soft, thick down half an inch deep. We then turned the skins on the board and rubbed them with fine wood ash, which soon dried them. We sent great quantities home to friends in England, and I believe to this day some are adorning opera-cloaks, &c.

On March 9, 1858, we started from Varna on our return journey to Tchernavoda. Our winter's gunning had only whetted our appetite for sport, and, fancying we should see lots of game by the way, we determined to do the hundred and twenty miles on foot, taking our time, and shooting all we could. We hired our old arabaji Ibrahim again, and, with Mehmet and Sali as cavasses, we started off on our tramp, taking with us the good wishes of our kind friends, and a lot of hard-boiled eggs from one of the English maids, for 'they were such wonderful things to stay by you after you had eaten them!' It seemed that we were doomed to have a rough time of it whenever we started on a journey, for towards night it began to thaw rapidly, and the hard-beaten snow a foot deep was turned into slush. For four days we pushed on as rapidly as we could, having relinquished all hope of sport, and only intent on getting over the journey. During the second day we came to a large patch of blood on the snow, and on inquiring about it at the next village we were given the following account.

Delli Mahomet, the leader of a band of brigands (I believe he was the same man who had stopped an

Englishman near Devna a few years before and shot one of his companions), had taken up his quarters at a village near here. The Varna Pasha, being informed of this, sent two Zaptiehs on foot to arrest him; this they did, and, having handcuffed him, proceeded to march him off to Varna. On reaching the spot where we saw the blood, one of the Zaptiehs proposed that he should just run down to a village near to buy some tobacco, leaving his comrade meanwhile in charge of the prisoner. Delli Mahomet spread his coat on a steep bank, and, seating himself on the upper part of it, offered his guard a seat just below him. While in this position Delli Mahomet struck him a sudden blow behind the ear with the loose chain that connected his hands, then fished out the key of the handcuffs from the Zaptieh's sash, cut his throat to make all safe, and walked off, taking his pistols, knife, and other small etceteras, such as loose cash and tobacco-box. I need not say he lived to enjoy himself, and I daresay he is at this moment a much-respected village Turk.

We were three nights on the road, and at each halting-place received a kindly welcome, but I cannot say we slept well. The first night we had a young calf penned in one corner of our room, and about once every half-hour he said 'Ba-a,' and up we jumped, wide awake, and much disgusted with both him and ourselves. The next night we were devoured by 'F sharps;' and on the third, our host, an old Kalmuc Tartar, made us some splendid damper, of which, being very hungry, we ate voraciously just before going to

bed. Talk of the expansive property of steam, it is nothing to fresh damper! I am sure, if Stephenson had only turned his attention to it, we should now be travelling 100 miles an hour, dragged by a lump of dough. It is an awful thing to have inside you; and, if my ribs had not been very well knit together, I must have 'bust' that night. Sleep was out of the question, so we sat up and smoked, and soon we were joined by the old Tartar, who made us some black coffee, and then brought down from a shelf a great curiosity to show us. It was a shirt of chain armour, which he told us had been hundreds of years in his family; his great-grandfather had once counted the links, but the number had been forgotten by his father, and there was no one clever enough in these degenerate days to re-count them! We reached Tchernavoda about two hours after dark on the fourth day fairly exhausted, and I do not think either of us could have walked a mile farther to save our lives. All day we had marched in mud and slush over the tops of our boots, and at every valley we crossed we had to wade up to our waists in a torrent, sometimes half a mile wide. Our feet had given way, and, when we took off our boots and stockings before old Vlatt's fire, we found they were covered with blisters. We were soon in bed, and it was some days before we could put a foot to the ground again. At intervals during the first night we were astonished to hear what we supposed to be the discharge of a cannon, but we were too tired to care to rouse ourselves to inquire what it was. In the morning it con-

tinued, and we then discovered it was caused by the water rising in the Danube and bursting the ice which covered it to the thickness of three feet. When we were able to get out, we saw immense floes of ice passing down the river, piled up in some places twelve or fifteen feet high. The river had overflowed the opposite bank, and, as far as we could see, the valley was one vast expanse of water, with only the tops of trees standing out. Thousands on thousands of wild fowl were returning north, and all living creation seemed to be happy and busy at the prospect of spring, which in Bulgaria comes in all its vigour directly 'Frost Effendi' is dead; and now he was in the last agonies, and a hard death it was! No one pitied him, no one regretted him, but all looked forward with a restless longing to the first days of the opening spring. This feeling came strong upon us; we longed to be at work, and soon had out our chains, levels, &c., and began the staking out of the railway.

The middle of the Tchernavoda valley for a distance of about sixteen miles was a few feet below the level of the Danube, and so each spring, when the ice broke up, the river flowed over it, and converted it into a series of shallow lakes which gradually dried up during the heats of summer. We had left orders in the autumn for old Vlatt to employ a gang of men to throw up a dam across the mouth of the valley near the river bank to protect it from the rising flood; so the only water with which we now had to contend was from the local land drainage, and, by keeping the line on the edge of

the valley on a low embankment, we could avoid this; but, as I am not writing a treatise on Engineering, I shall not enumerate the difficulties we had to encounter; nor dare I tell in these days of trades unions how rapidly the entire line was staked out, or I shall be cut by my fellow-craftsmen for damaging trade. Suffice it to say, there never was work of the sort more quickly done. In a few weeks the results of our labour were before the Directors in England, and we had only to wait patiently for them to decide if they would go on with the line. I suppose the money market was 'tight,' or else the British public did not put much faith in this 'splendid field for European enterprise,' for the summer had passed away and autumn was upon us before we received the first ship-load of barrows, picks, &c., with orders to proceed with our work.

CHAPTER X.

Tent life and its troubles—Thunderstorms—Fixing tent pegs—Turkish wedding.

BEFORE spring was over we moved to Kustendjie, hunted up our boxes and tent, and encamped in the open space just outside the town and a few hundred yards at the rear of the khan, where our old cook Clianthe started his kitchen, and rooms were found for our other men. We now began tent life in earnest; and I must say, in spite of all that has been written to the contrary, it is not pleasant, at all events not in Turkey, nor can I picture to myself any place where it would be preferable to a dwelling made of any other material. It is one degree better than no covering at all, but miles behind a cow-shed in England. I suppose the fleas do not agree with me, for they seem very fond of camping out, and to keep free of them one has to strike tent and take up fresh ground every few days. The common house-fly, too, finds it a nice warm spot to buzz about in, and if there is a mosquitoe within a mile he takes up his quarters there every night. When it is fine the heat inside is stifling, and when cold or only cool the draughts make one miserable. Ours was a good-sized Turkish tent, with

walls. It would resist a lot of rain if not accompanied with wind; but in the latter case, as soon as the canvas was soaked, each large drop driving upon it from the outside sent ten smaller ones in upon us, and soon we were knee-deep in mud and our beds wet through. In fine weather we were roasted, and tormented by flies all day, and the only endurable time was after sunset. Then, with half the walls down and nothing on but a pair of trowsers and a flannel shirt, with a pleasant comrade and good 'baccy,' life went on very well. As soon as the sun topped the horizon all comfort was over. Down came the flies from the tent-pole, and flew at one's eyes, nose, and mouth with a bulldog persistency only to be stopped by death; but then their places would be taken by others, and this would go on till darkness sent them up their pole again.

The slanting rays of the sun on the canvas seemed hotter in the early morning than at any other part of the day, and in turns we would jump up and pull down part of the wall to let in a breath more air, and for a few moments hoped for rest as we lay in our camp beds with a good bit of buff visible. Ah! we are not particular, but we cannot stand being a study of anatomy for those half-dozen grinning yokels who stop to stare at us as they pass on their way to market. So up we get, and away we go for a swim in the tepid sea, and then home in time for the *café-au-lait* which Clianthe brings us for number one breakfast.

During the months of May, June, and July we had a thunderstorm on an average every twenty-four hours.

It generally came on at night, and while it lasted there was no sleep for us. Everything in the tent was made of iron; iron beds, iron chairs, iron cups and plates, and iron-bound boxes, and our interest in the storm was painfully increased by this attractive metal. Every now and again during these storms the tent-pegs to the windward 'drew,' and down would come the tent on the top of us. When this happened we scriggled out of our beds, leaving our nightshirts inside them, and crept out in a state of nature, armed with fresh pegs and a big mallet; by the light of the flashes the pegs were driven in, and with an 'all together' up came the canvas and all was pulled 'taut.' We then had a good rub with towels, kept under the mattress for this purpose, donned our shirts, and as soon as the storm abated were asleep.

I used to think that, if it rained and blew for long, no tent could stand it, as the water running down the lines, and the constant jerking at the pegs, would soon loosen them even if as long as one's leg. A bright thought, however, struck me one night whilst I lay shivering in bed after a second outing to put up the tent, and the next morning I carried it out and found it most successful. I cut a trench in the turf the length and width of the peg at right angles to the tent line; this, by the help of an old knife, I carried down eighteen inches. I then thrust my hand to the bottom and undermined each side of the trench; when this was done the tent line was passed round the middle of the peg, which was then put into the trench and turned

crossways. As long as the tent lines would last there was no fear of the pegs drawing. No residence repays one so well for a little tidiness as a tent. Everything should be carefully stowed away, and nothing ever left about. To me it would be misery to share a tent with an untidy man, though I have often put up with one in a cottage and never thought about it. Tin plates, cups, and dishes, all lined with porcelain, are the best for travel, and then the box they pack in will answer for a table, if a better cannot be had. A tent should always be pitched on sloping ground, and a trench dug round it to keep out the water during storms. I am speaking now of summer life, and, as my experience only lasted till the first snow and frost, I shall say nothing of such helps to comfort as sinking a hole and pitching a tent over it, with a good fire-place and chimney cut out of the earth bank.

We had only just got settled down in our tent life when Mehmet, who was a splendid-looking Arnout, came one day to beg the loan of Cole-ei for a few hours, that he might go to meet a wedding party, who, according to the usual custom, were escorting home a bride to her husband's house. After a few cautions the favour was granted, and during the afternoon he rode up to the tent to show himself off. The horse was groomed till his coat shone again, and coloured ribbons and other finery hung from the bridle. Mehmet himself was in full dress—a red hussar jacket with loose sleeves all covered with gold braid, a green embroidered waistcoat, red sash, and then his white petticoats so be-

tucked and begathered that they stood out at right angles from his hips. Below these appeared fawn-coloured breeches made to fit tight from the knee to the foot, and fastened on the outside of the leg by a gross of hooks and eyes. A pair of rough shoes completed his attire. I must not forget, though, to mention that he carried in a leather belt, stuck on the middle of his stomach, a pair of huge silver-mounted pistols, and his 'kara bitchak' (black knife), also ornamented with silver and at least two feet long; besides these he had yards of silver chain hanging from his neck, and other shorter ones from which dangled a silver box containing greased rag for cleaning his arms, another with a verse of the Koran in it to protect him from the evil eye, and a pair of 'maasha,' or tongs, to pick up embers from the fire with which to light his pipe; then the pipe itself appeared above his head, the long stem being shoved down his back. He looked a perfect Delli Kan (wild blood), and, from the way he grinned, was evidently well content with himself. The bridegroom had started early in the morning with his mother and numberless relatives to fetch home his bride, and as he was rather a swell, and some day might be 'Mudir' of the town, all who had a horse turned out to meet him and his new acquisition.

Soon a cloud of dust appeared on the top of the hill, and we saw a cavalcade of arabas jogging along, surrounded by a troop of wild-looking boys and horsemen. Every now and then off would dart one of these at a gallop, first to the right, then to the left, pursued

by a dozen others whose object was to touch him. Well they rode and wonderfully the horses turned and twisted; just as half a dozen hands were thrust towards their prize, round would spin the little horse, and at the same moment the rider slipped from his back, and nothing was to be seen but a foot hanging to the peak of the saddle; he was up and into his seat again a moment later, and often succeeded after a ten minutes' race in getting back to the road without receiving the touch. First and foremost among these youngsters rode Mehmet, and his turn-out was the admiration of all beholders; and if Cole-ei had not been properly protected by a verse of the Koran hung in a bag round his neck, he must have fallen a victim to the evil eye brought on by the openly expressed admiration of all present. By the side of the bride's araba rode the bridegroom, surrounded by the staid old married men, and I must say he did not look particularly happy. He was naturally a sulky, sinister-looking fellow; but on this auspicious occasion I suppose he thought it behoved him to be cheerful, so he put on a grin that did not fit his features, they being built to carry a scowl and a sneer.

Poor fellow! I may have misjudged him; perhaps it was only his most natural anxiety as to what the bride might prove, which gave him that look. It is often difficult even in England to know exactly what the fair one may turn out after marriage, and many a poor fellow finds he has got more than he bargained for.

What, therefore, must it be in Turkey, where the

parents on either side arrange the bargain, and the damsel is bought literally like a pig in a poke, without ever being seen! It is such a risky affair that the wise Mahomet provided for the case in a small degree, and it is right according to his law for the bridegroom, when he first enters the harem, to refuse to fulfil his bargain, should the lady prove to have no nose, or one eye deficient; she must also be a *sweet* young creature—if not, the intended husband may cry off. All this is strict law; but I fancy in these days it is pretty well known before marriage what the lady is like, and I can remember more than one courtyard where a fair face showed itself for a moment even to such a vile Giaour as myself.

On comes the cavalcade, and as it nears the town the horsemen all begin to gallop round and round the bride's carriage and pop off pistols in such a devil-may-care way that we wish Cole-ei was safe in his stable. The poor bride cannot see much of the fun, for not only is she veiled, but the curtains of the araba are so closely drawn that she must be in darkness. She has been thus boxed up for some hours, and will not be let out till safe inside the courtyard, alone with the old women. From that moment, if she passes muster with the bridegroom, her harem life commences, and, judging by our ideas, it would seem a dreary one; but I daresay the Turkish women would not change with the daughters of the West, with all their liberty.

CHAPTER XI.

A scanty wardrobe—A stitch in time—Dinners—Rare birds—Eagle owls—Interior of a foxes' earth—Digging out a young badger—Visit from a French captain.

OUR wardrobe now began to give us serious uneasiness. Owing to the uncertainty whether the works were to be carried on, we had delayed ordering any fresh clothes from England, and those we had brought out had greatly suffered from the clinging attentions of the acacia scrub at Varna. There was but one pair of boots worth mentioning between the two of us, and latterly we had to take it by turns to wear them, and we had to content ourselves with the same trowsers for Sundays and workdays. I can see mine now! They had been a swell pair of black-and-white check, and had begun life in London. Now there was a fringe all round the bottom of each leg, and the knees, from getting baggy, had at last begun to give way and show glimpses of white drawers beneath. R——'s had given way in a part that obliged him always to sit when in company, but had this advantage over mine, that they always looked well in the saddle. Out came the 'housewifes' with which careful sisters had provided us, and we spent one whole afternoon and evening repairing

damages. I worked away for hours darning my knees with blue worsted, and, when I had crossed and recrossed them well, thought myself no end of a swell with my needle. Pride had a great fall, though, when it came to taking them off for bed, for I then found out that I had cleverly sewn them through to the drawers beneath! After a long discussion as to what should be done, I settled the matter by cutting the knee out of the drawers and leaving it in the trowsers. I afterwards came to the conclusion that my forgetfulness had led to a great discovery, for never did patch wear so well, and should any gentleman want his trowsers darned let him follow my plan! R—— was not so successful, for, owing to the position of his weak spot, he was obliged to take off his trowsers, and so they did not profit by a patch from his drawers, and there was no end to his darning.

There is a peculiarity about Turkish cooking. Wherever you are, and at whatever time of the day you ask 'When will dinner be ready?' the answer is always the same. 'In ten minutes;' and yet I have had all sorts of dishes on the table at the same time. I don't understand how it is managed, but I think it is an improvement on our English plan of having to keep to a fixed hour. If no order is given, dinner is served as a matter of course at sundown, and this habit is usual among all classes. We were therefore somewhat surprised one day at Clianthe's asking, 'Please, sare, what time you eat your dinner to-day?' We answered, 'When we are hungry.' 'Vera good, sare, 'cos me get one booful

dinner—ros' bif, sare. One buffalo he fall over cliff last night and break him neck!' Well, we are neither Turks nor Jews, and it will be a change from the everlasting baked lamb that we have had for many weeks.

There is no part of Europe that offers so good a field for ornithologists as Bulgaria, especially for birds of prey, which abound in great numbers, and the wonder is there is anything left for them to prey upon. During an afternoon's ride you may see a dozen different species, and some very rare ones. As soon as the nesting season was over, we set to work collecting skins, and in the course of the summer sent home some very good ones; but a want of knowledge on the subject greatly hindered us, and we had no books to help us. We wasted much time in shooting and skinning such birds as the hoopoe, roller, and bee-eater, being attracted by their lovely plumage, while we overlooked many rarer specimens because they were less beautiful to our ignorant eyes. It was interesting to observe the way in which some of the birds, especially the eagles and falcons, adapted themselves to this treeless country. Many a time in my boyhood had my hands and feet turned cold and clammy with excitement as I read of men suspended by a single rope over the face of some fearful precipice with nothing between them and the sea-washed rocks hundreds of feet below; or of boys, still more venturesome, climbing without the protection of a rope to some pinnacle of rock, to plunder an eagle's eyrie. There was no need to encounter such dangers here, for one had only to struggle through the tangled grass and thorns at the

bottom of Trajan's wall, to collect as many eggs of various sorts as one could desire; and not only here, but constantly on the open plain, we came upon the nest of some such lordly bird as the golden eagle. Whilst wandering one evening on the face of the rugged sea-cliff at the back of Kustendjie, I found on the bare earth the nest of an eagle owl. There were three eggs in it, all of different sizes—the smallest about as large as a hen's egg, and the biggest twice that size. I left them alone, and, when they were hatched off, I used to visit them every morning, first to observe the habits of the birds, and secondly as a plunderer, for hardly a day passed without my finding something for the larder near the nest. One day it would be a fine leveret, another some young bustards, and they were always fresh and clean. At first the old birds were very shy; but, when they found I only came to collect ground rent, they took little notice and would sit and blink at me from a few yards distant. The three young birds grew up with the same difference in their size as there had been in the eggs. I don't know how to account for this. I know there is always a difference between the male and female bird, but how about the middle one? Perhaps it represented the neuter gender! Every afternoon we either went for a ride or strolled out with our guns, and often did not return till after dark. Our favourite walk was down to the lakes and home by the sea-cliffs. Sometimes we would take off our trowsers and wade among the high reeds on the edge of the smaller lake, searching for the nests of the wild goose,

and often returned quite laden with plunder, and never empty-handed. The pleasure of the sport was, however, greatly marred by the leeches, which swarmed in the marsh, and soon fixed themselves on our legs. If they did not hurt much, or do any particular harm, yet our return home was greatly retarded by the necessity of sitting on the grass, minus trowsers, till the bleeding should be stopped. On the side of the low hill between the lake and Kustendjie were numerous foxes' and badgers' earths; and, as the sun went down, out would come the owners, the old ones intent on pillage and murder, the youngsters to have a game of romps, and pretty, amusing little beasts they were. On one occasion R—— and I determined to dig out an earth with the hope of getting a young fox to tame. It was easy work, as the ground was of a sandy nature, and the earth, as we shovelled it out, fell down the cliff. We made a complete section of the hole, and, though we failed in finding young master fox at home, the work was most interesting. First the earth ran winding in for about five yards, where there was a bolt-hole; and about three yards farther on was an oven-shaped room as big as a large hamper, the sides and floor of which were swept quite clean and free from dust. From this entrance hall branched off three passages, which, after winding about, joined one another, and here and there led to a bolt-hole on the surface. There were several rooms at the sides of the passages, in one of which we found the following provisions, all quite fresh. A leveret, a turtle-dove, seven roach, and three goose's eggs. We were

greatly astonished at the time, and to this day it remains a puzzle to me how the foxes caught the fish, and how they could carry such large eggs! They must have brought them from the lake, a quarter of a mile distant. The eggs were unbroken, and the fish had not a mark upon them. We took them all home and ate them, to teach the fox that it is not so pleasant to be plundered as he may suppose. Hundreds of times he and his had stolen from man, but I take it this was the first time a man had taken a dinner from a fox! Some little way from the larder was a large room with a very cosy dry bed of rushes in it, all beautifully clean, except for the fleas that swarmed there; we did not mind them, however, for we were pretty nearly in a state of nature, and, after our work was done, a swim in the sea soon relieved us of their company.

Some time before this, while we were busy staking out the line, our poor little terrier was bitten by a mad dog, and, as he soon showed symptoms himself of the fearful malady, we had to destroy him. It was a great loss for us, as at that time we had no other English dog, and not only was he useful and valuable, but we looked on him quite as a friend. If he had been with us now, he would have saved us this long dig by just trotting through the earth, and announcing 'not at home.'

A perfect craving for pets was upon us, so we soon started on another digging excursion, and this time were more successful. We visited a number of earths. Some looked too laborious an undertaking; others

lacked that delicious odour of fox all good Englishmen love, a faint puff of which borne along on the evening breeze would transport us to a covert side in the V. W. H., and change the broiling July day to a nice moist one in December. At last we find one that looks like business, not too large and in good ground for digging. 'Out of the way, Caplan, and let me have a sniff.' Down goes my nose well into the hole, but a short grunt and a snap within half an inch of it sends Caplan and me rolling down the hill together, with, as far as I am concerned, anything but a pleasant emotion! Had a tiger sprung out on me, I really think I could not have experienced a greater panic. I soon recovered, and then, as navvies say, stripped to our linings, at it we go; but what beast are we going to unearth? No fox would dare take such a liberty with one. Whatever it is, it must have some sense of the humorous, and I daresay is now splitting its sides at the thought of the fright it gave me! Caplan is as curious as we are, and, before we had dug half an hour, strikes headlong into the hole and drags out a little badger not larger than a half-grown kitten. One nip of those iron jaws has finished all fun for it in this world, and we feel as vexed as if we had lost a valuable domestic animal. We now tie Caplan up to make her safe, and then, scratching the earth away with our hands, soon come to 'little brother' and pull him out. From the first moment he shows no sort of fear, and, when let loose on the grass, plays and dances about like a three months old puppy. He proves the

last of the family at home, so we carry him off to the tent, and he at once takes to a bowl of bread and milk, and, though never confined in any way, does not attempt to leave us. He lived with us for years, and I am glad to be able to give him an excellent character. There is a saying 'smells like a badger.' This is a shameful libel on the cleanest beast I know. He has no smell if he is allowed his liberty, and looks after his sanitary arrangements for himself. It is only when shut up in some small space that he becomes objectionable, and I am sure, much as man dislikes the smell, he likes it less. Then he has no parasites of any kind, and this makes him a splendid pet in this flea-infested land. The greyhounds soon made friends with him, and long before he was full grown he was their master, and could roll them over with the greatest ease. He never lost his temper with man or beast, and would take a bullying at any moment. He was omnivorous; but the treat of his life was a lump of sugar, or, better still, a little honey. He slept under my bed all the time we were in the tent, and would follow us about like a dog.

One morning we were surprised to see a French man-of-war in the harbour, and later on in the day we were honoured by a visit from the captain, who sat and chatted for an hour. No sooner was he gone than in walked a lieutenant, and, one after the other, all the officers of the ship. We were delighted to see these gentlemen; but after their visits had all been paid over again within twenty-four hours, we began

to wish we could say 'not at home.' Friend Badger helped us out of the difficulty, for, while the captain was paying his third visit, he quietly climbed on a box behind his chair and took a sniff at his locks, attracted, I suspect, by the smell of Paris pomade. One glance was sufficient; up jumped the captain and wished us a hasty farewell, and we saw no more of him, as he evidently did not relish the attentions of our ferocious-looking pet. All the other officers from this time were kept to the ship by duty—at least I suppose so, for they paid us no more visits.

CHAPTER XII.

A Funeral—À la Franca Turks—Village Turks—Turkish officials—Turkish women—Children—Provincial governors.

HULLO! What's up now? Something out of the common, for here come a lot of Turks *actually hurrying!* Has the end of the world come? Yes, it *had* come to one of the party—as it must come to us all in some shape or other—and his friends and male relations are taking him to his last bed on earth. The evil spirits have complete power to torment him from the moment he breathes his last breath till the earth covers him, so, like good Osmanlis, they are making it as short as they can. On they go at a trot carrying the rough coffin, till they reach the dirty, untidy burying ground, where, among the thousands of narrow stones with a rude representation of a turban carved on each, a shallow grave has been prepared. Without a moment's delay the body is deposited at the bottom, some rough boards placed over the hole, and the earth piled on the top. Ah, he is at rest at last, and the evil spirits may pass on to the next death-bed! The Mollah says a few words from the Koran, and then the entire party squat round, smoke their pipes, and have a friendly chat.

Not one of them shows the least sign of grief, and why should they? Was not Hussein a good Mussulman, and is he not at this moment with Mahomed, administered to by houris? His spirit may be in peace, but his bones are in anything but pleasant quarters. Of all foul spots on earth, a Turkish burial ground, if near a populous town, is the foulest. Long before the body has returned to dust, the frail boards are decayed, and down they go with their burden of earth, leaving the ends of the planks sticking out; between these are spaces leading down to the body, which the hungry, wolfish dogs soon enlarge, and, returning to the surface with their human feast, gorge till they are sleepy, when they retire to the now untenanted grave and there take their ease. Perhaps in time a young family is born in it, and the place of the dead teams with vile life. We turn away with horror, and follow the track into the town to have a talk with the living. There sits as usual old Mehemet, the governor, on the open divan in front of the *café*. We make our salaam and drink a coffee with him.

There is always one subject in common between us and all village Turks, and we are started on it at once by his asking the history of Cole-ei, and then the horse and his doings are discussed for an hour. A 'cute old Turkish farmer once gave me a piece of advice which I have since always followed. If you can help it, never have dealings with a Turk who is dressed in *Frank* clothes; but if through force of circumstances you are obliged to do so, don't believe what he says,

but take it for granted he is a rogue. A Turk never adopts the dress of a Giaour till he has lost his native virtue and honesty, and acquired some of the vices of the people he apes. Is not the truth of this seen in the cowardly behaviour of the officer in his French uniform who drives his poor, patient troops into action, keeping well in the rear himself? And if you desire a larger picture, have you not got it in the ruin of the nation which is being brought about entirely by the vices of its Europeanised officials? Doubtless the village Turk has his faults—who has not? but they are faults of a manly kind, and as a counterbalance he has many a fine trait in his character. He loves to be idle, and will be so as long as he can; but if the necessity arise, no one will go through more hardship and labour than he will. He will struggle on long after hope is past, and actually will die of hunger and hardship without a murmur. If led by those he can trust (which is rarely the case), he will fight splendidly, and he never questions an order even if he sees death staring at him through it. He is faithful to his master be he Mussulman or Christian, and will work as hard as anyone if he but see a time of rest before him. He is far the most honest of any of the various people of Turkey, and is proud and careful of his promise. He is hospitable both by his religion and by nature, and it is rarely he turns a stranger from his door; never if he is a fellow-Osmanli. He thinks little of money and has few wants. He is kind to all his women, be they wives or slaves, and is himself the slave of all his little

children, who treat him as a great plaything. Then he is never *wantonly* cruel to an animal, or any creature, though when he thinks it necessary he will ride his horse to a stand-still, or cut the throat of half a dozen people to procure their purses. He has an odd sort of respect for life, and shows it when one of his beasts is *in extremis*. Suppose his horse smashes its leg when on a journey over a sandy plain where there is not a mouthful of food or a drop of water. Well, he just takes off its trappings, then turns away without casting one look at the poor beast he leaves to die. Such a thing as shooting an animal to put it out of its misery no more enters a Turk's head than it does ours when we see a man in the same condition.

Yonder gang of men trudging along with their bullock carts are all capable of cutting my throat for the few piastres they may find in my pocket; but at the same time if I take one of them into my service, give him 100*l.*, and send him by road with it to Stamboul, he will do his best to deliver it safely, and at all events will not touch it himself. Then how handy a servant he is! If I only order him to shoot you on your way to visit me, he will do it without the least hesitation, and, what is more, hold his peace when it is done!

True he is a barbarian, but with many qualities that we of the West might copy with advantage. But what can I say of his brother of the town, he in Government employ, from the yasjie (clerk) to the highest in

office? They are all dishonest, and only live to increase their wealth, and, as long as they can do this by fair means or foul, care nothing for others or what may come after them. Their word is never to be relied on, and their most sacred promises stand for nothing. They cringe and fawn on all they think above them, and are brutal and overbearing to their inferiors. They are barbarians from highest to lowest. They have failed to adopt any of the virtues of the West, but have welcomed with open arms all the vices. Yes, *all*; for now I dare not except that most pernicious of all civilised evils—drunkenness. It has spread of late years with fearful rapidity, and I doubt if there is any place where it is more rampant than in the kenacs of Stamboul.

The prosperity and greatness of England and other Western countries is doubtless mainly due to the cultivation and refinement of the women, and also to their bodily vigour. The beneficial influence of mothers and sisters acting on young children makes them in after life honourable and upright men, and many a man would turn out a ruffian if it were not for this. Then the same power sheds its influence from the higher to the lower classes, and thus helps to improve all. In Turkey this is entirely wanting. The Turkish mother is kind to her offspring, but is quite incapable of enlarging and cultivating its mind; she is almost entirely uneducated, and has been made to believe she was created solely for the pleasure of man, and that even her hope of a future is owing to the great demand there will be in heaven for houris to minister to the he-angels.

Among the rich Turks the wives live a lazy, useless, sensual life, doing no sort of work and never opening a book or paper. Their days are spent in stuffy-smelling rooms, smoking cigarettes and eating sweetmeats, and the only excitement of the day is paying visits to other women, or stewing in the debilitating bath. They have no rational subject of conversation, so naturally drift into filthy discussions and obscene stories. Their companions are their slaves—black niggers from the centre of Africa, or pretty Georgians who have been bred and reared for the market. Their minds never expand and are a wretched blank. As their minds are so are their bodies; from never taking exercise, from being cooped up in close rooms, and from eating so much unwholesome food, they almost lose the use of their limbs, and it is a horrid sight to see them waddling and shuffling along. What hope can there be for the sons of such mothers? Until the boy is ten years old he lives in the harem with the women, and listens all day to their low, ignorant conversation. He is stuffed with unwholesome food, and allowed to do just as he likes; in fact both mind and body are poisoned in the most perfect way. At ten years old the fledgeling Pasha hops forth from the maternal nest and pecks about among his father's numerous servants in the kitchen and stable yard; he soon learns, if he has not already done so, to use disgusting oaths, to ride a horse bare-backed, to smoke a pipe, and to kick, cuff, and bully the cringing menials he lives with. Each day he is instructed by a Mollah, or priest, in a little reading

and writing, and by the time he is a man he can perhaps scribble a letter. No one has ever corrected him, no one has snubbed him; on the contrary he has been taught to look on himself as a very fine fellow, and one of a most superior nation.

Among the working classes it is somewhat better, for with them the women have to do the household work, and therefore get a little healthy occupation for mind and body, and the child is more with his equals, and less with toadying servants, and the result is a far superior animal. Another great source of evil is polygamy. Supposing the sexes to be pretty equally divided, if one man marries three or four wives, three or four men must go without the luxury; and, as the women are only allowed to see and speak to their nearest male relatives, many a young man never enjoys woman's society from the time he leaves his father's harem. It is the fashion to look on the Mussulman women as paragons of virtue, and I admit there is not so much immorality among them as among their Christian sisters; but there is little honour due to them on this score. They are good because they have no chance of being the reverse. They are never trusted by fathers or husbands, and are never allowed out of sight of a duenna, till they become duennas themselves. From what I have been told by Turks, I believe if they had half the liberty enjoyed by European women, Stamboul and all Turkey would be a hell upon earth. Even supposing all this were changing and becoming better, which I deny is the case, it would take many genera-

tions before any improvement could be visible, and in the meantime the Mussulman population is rapidly decreasing, and must before very long naturally subside beneath the ocean that is flowing over it from the West. Here and there among the governing classes of Stamboul, one may find really well-educated Turks, men who speak several European languages, and are pretty well up in the politics of other countries. These have been attached to Embassies in Paris or London, or have been educated in some Western school. They see the decay of their country as plainly as we do, and feel the utter hopelessness of attempting to arrest it, and therefore turn their attention to accumulating riches, acquiring power, and surrounding themselves with pomp and luxury. The more plainly they see the deterioration of their own country, the more they hate their more fortunate neighbours, and there is really no fanatic like the Europeanised travelled Turk. For reasons of diplomacy he may succeed in hiding this, and it is rarely that so phlegmatic a nature will break out and betray the real animal concealed below the European cloak.

As man procures honey by sending bees far and wide to distant fields to plunder the flowers, and then, when they have done so, quietly smothers his servants and appropriates the fruits of their labour, so the Turk in his palmy days used to send his Pashas to distant provinces to plunder the inhabitants and collect riches, and when money was wanted and the hive supposed to be full, he was recalled home and bowstrung, and the

riches he had thought his own, taken from him for his august master. The plan answered well, both for the Sultan and for his poor subjects. The former always had enough money, and procured it without the necessity of keeping up an expensive staff; and the latter were only robbed or taxed for one despot. Now that Western statesmen have put their fingers in the Eastern pie, and the useful bowstring has been abolished, not only does the Pasha have to tax for himself, but also for his Government; and the result is, that the farmers and peasants are robbed beyond endurance, and the Government coffers are never full. The Pasha never becomes as rich as he did, and has not the opportunity of illustrating in his own person the justice and statecraft of the Padishah!

CHAPTER XIII.

Commencement of the railway—Mosquitoes—An awkward adventure—Turning the first sod—A strike of workmen—A ride to Varna—Too early a start—Men paid and paid out.

DURING this summer we learnt to speak, and, what is more difficult, understand, sufficient Turkish to make us independent as travellers, and to enable us to enter into conversation with the various Turkish-speaking inhabitants. We had a fine opportunity for this study, having no work to do, and no overwhelming amount of reading to divert our attention; the only piece of English literature within a hundred miles of us being the label outside our pickle pot, and we soon learnt that by heart. Wet days hung heavy on hand, and, to help to kill time, we cut out a chess board on the top of our table and played at this game for hours together. At length the long-looked-for and anxiously-desired permission to begin the work arrived from England. It was soon followed by a shipload of barrows, picks, shovels, &c. Our elder brother also came up for a few days to give us instructions as to the carrying on of the works. I was despatched on Kar Yardi to Tchernavoda and the neighbouring villages to hunt up workmen and spread abroad the news that no able-bodied

man would be turned away. I was empowered to state what we were willing to pay, and wherever I went young men flocked away behind me for Kustendjie. I cannot say I much enjoyed my trip, for, on nearing the Danube, I found that all-powerful tormentor, the mosquitoe, swarming by millions, and, before I had been in old Vlatt's house half an hour, every pore of my skin that was exposed had been pierced. Even cord knee-breeches and navvy boots were not a perfect protection, for, if a stitch or a thread were missing, a hundred of the little demons thrust in their probosces, and each drank his drop of blood, and left his atom of poison in payment. The whole valley was humming in the still air from the motion of their wings, and since that night it has ever seemed to me the most awful of sounds. I think I would rather sleep out in the velt in Africa and hear the roar of a lion, than hear the song of the mosquitoe on the Danube. I was soon in a burning fever, and all chance of rest was out of the question. In the courtyard were piled up heaps of burning manure, and collected round, in the densest of the smoke, were the entire family and all their live stock. I soon joined them, and, though the mosquitoes were not quite so vicious here, no one but a Moldave or a devil could have slept in it.

The next day, in company with an old Turk, I started for the village of Rassova, and on the way had rather an awkward adventure. I got tired of the companionship of my friend, not being able to understand more than half he said, from the way in which

the jolting of the pony jogged the words out of him.

So I passed on at a canter, leaving him to follow. When well ahead, I pulled up into an easy tripple, and soon came in sight of a small hut, placed about two hundred yards from the road, at the door of which sat a dirty-looking Turk. Just as I got opposite him, he bawled out 'Come here!' in a commanding voice I did not approve of, and so I took no notice. Again the same order, with 'you son of a dog' added thereto. 'Son of a dog to you, and mind your own business,' and on I went. A quarter of an hour later, as I was riding down a steep hill, I heard the slow canter of a horse behind me. Supposing it was my old companion coming up, I did not turn round, and was astonished, when the head of the horse came alongside of me, to see it was a black one, and not the grey my friend was riding. Turning quickly round I was just in time to see the flash of a big sword, as it came down on my shoulders with such force I was nearly knocked out of the saddle. The blow was given with the flat side, or I should not now be writing this. In a moment my spurs touched Kar Yardi's sides, and away he shot like a bolt, thus giving me time to pull out a revolver. On came the Turk shouting and swearing, and, when all was ready, I let him near me, and then, suddenly checking Kar Yardi, thrust the barrel in his face as he pulled up beside me. At that moment Mr. Swaggerer very nearly started on a journey from which there is no return, for I drew the trigger back so far I was surprised it did not go off,

and I was only deterred from giving a longer pull by seeing my friend turn first white and then green. This led to a parley, when, in a half-swaggering, half-cowed manner, he informed me he was a Zaptieh placed by the roadside to examine Teskeris, or passports, and look out for robbers. How was I to have known this, and why could he not have told me? I made the rascal ride on with me to Rassova, kept him there all day, and afterwards left him at his hut on my return journey in the evening. He soon showed signs of being in a blue fright, and made all sorts of overtures to me; but, as I still suffered from the whack on my back, I was not to be pacified. I spent another sleepless night at Tchernavoda, and on the third day returned to Kustendjie. I then sent to Issa Effendi and told him what had occurred. He at once sent off a mounted Zaptieh to fetch in the offender, and, as he had nothing to say for himself when my case was stated before him, he was convicted, and I was asked to choose his punishment. 'Should he be bastinadoed, or have six months' imprisonment?' I at once rejected the former, and at my request the latter was reduced to one month, but I made sure that he got that by sending Mehmet from time to time to the prison. I met the man the very day he was released, on a lonely road, and did not much relish the encounter, especially as he was drawling out, as he walked along, what, I believe, is their nearest approach to a national air (or more properly *howl*, for air there is none). It is of a warlike tendency, and the first line may be interpreted thus—'Mercy, mercy,

Padishah! give me leave and I will go to Moscow and fetch you the head of Menchikoff.' Moscow being some way off and difficult to get at, I could not help wondering if it would strike the gaol-bird that *my* head might do to make shift with for a time! But no; when he recognised me, he stopped and salaamed, and poured out a volume of thanks to me, for not choosing the bastinado and for reducing his term of imprisonment from six months to one month.

On September 1, 1858, our elder brother (to whom I shall henceforth give his Turkish title of 'Buyuk Tchellaby'—great gentleman) started on his way to Varna. He was accompanied by his European staff (R—— and myself!) and about two hundred workmen, chiefly Turks and Tartars, as far as where his road crossed the railway. He halted on the line, and, taking a shovel, turned up a sod, and so the making of the first railway in Turkey was begun. Before leaving he spoke to the men, again told them what their pay would be, and said they must look to R—— and myself for orders till the end of the month, on the last day of which he would return to pay them. They were all quite satisfied, and went to work with a will, and continued to do so for ten days. At the end of this time we were rather staggered one morning on going to the works, by their all crowding round us and asking to be paid. We repeated what the Buyuk Tchellaby had said, and told them that, were we even willing to do so, we were quite unable, as we had not enough money to pay them for one day's work. After a short discussion they seemed

content and returned to their work in the cutting, but there was not the same 'spring' in them. The fact was, they were so accustomed to being swindled, and were so astonished at the amount of work they had done, and we seemed so deep in their debt, that they were convinced they were trapped. On the fourteenth morning they saved us our walk to the cutting, for we awoke at daybreak to find them all standing round the door of the tent. On asking what they wanted, we were greeted by cries of 'Money, money, money, and all their money, and unless they got it, by Allah! they would keep all our plant and not go back to work.' We again explained that no money would be forthcoming till the end of the month, and Issa Effendi, whom we sent for, told them the same, and said he would be answerable for it. 'O Mahomed a Bin Bashi answerable for money, and expecting reasonable folk to trust to his word!' Well, there was nothing for it, their backs were up, and Inshallah they would not take to running a muck! They soon brought their bedding and blankets and encamped round the tent, and we on our side looked to our revolvers. For two days all was pretty quiet, after which minute guns were fired by the besiegers in the shape of oaths and abuse. They were blank cartridges and did no harm, and we hoped we might get nothing worse! On the third morning we held a council of war, assisted by Issa Effendi and Mehmet, and the result was we proposed to the men that one of us should ride down to Varna and state the case. They accepted the offer, and on their side promised to

stop the minute guns and remain quiet till the return of the messenger. We drew lots and it fell to me to go, so I chose Kar Yardi and at 3 P.M. was off. I halted for three hours in the night, and was at Varna by noon next day, and then found that the Buyuk Tchellaby was at Constantinople and would not be back till the next morning.

I ate all the food I could contain, read all the newspapers I could find, and topped up with twelve hours' sleep, and, when I looked out of my window in the morning, saw the Austrian Lloyds' boat just swinging to her anchor. Half an hour later I had stated our difficulties to my brother, and I must own was somewhat disgusted at his making so light of them. He declared there was no fear of the workmen proceeding to violence, and that at this early stage of the works it would never do to give way to them, as, if we did not now maintain our authority and keep our word, we should have endless trouble with them, and it would be next to impossible to make the railway at all.

At the time I somewhat doubted as to the men not taking to violence; but since those days I have learned that he was right in all he said, and that among these Easterns there may be a lot of smoke and yet no fire.

My brother now introduced me to a Mr. Boulby, who had come with him from Constantinople on his way to Kustendjie for shooting, and said he could not do better than return with me; and so it was settled. I don't think Boulby quite liked the prospect of the

welcome held out to him; but he had come thus far, so did not care to turn back.

We were off the same afternoon, and, having no luggage with us, did the fifty miles to Delemby Keui the first day. Here we had established a change of horses for the weekly post service, and had a friend in old Halilaga and a room in the corner of his stable. It was a real treat to sit and chat with my new acquaintance, and hear from him all that was going on in the world outside Bulgaria, especially as he was one of the pleasantest and most amusing men I ever met, and he was also a writer of considerable reputation.

But we must not forget the anxious besieged ones, so are off to bed early, with a promise to start at the first glimmer of light. I assured my companion I could rouse whenever I liked, and that I would not fail to call him before dawn. And I kept my word, for deceived by the moon, which threw a glimmer over the east half an hour before rising, I stirred up my friend, thinking the day was about to dawn. We did not discover my mistake till we were a mile on the road and were faced by the moon emerging from behind a hill in the distance! 'You beggar!' exclaimed Boulby. 'You may be able to wake when *you* like, but next time we journey together wake me when *I* like, and that will not be at 2 A.M.!' It was rather anxious work for me, for on these plains it is difficult to keep to the road by daylight, and almost impossible at night. However, luck was with us and we did not miss our way, but reached our tent by the middle of the day, where we were wel-

comed by R—— and the besiegers. I at once told the result of my mission, and then there was the very old gentleman to pay and no pitch hot! Off went the minute guns in a perfect volley, and it was as much as mortal could do not to resent the filthy verbal insults poured upon us. Issa Effendi, the governor, and the head of the police were called on to protect us; but they only made matters worse by their feeble behaviour, and either they sided with the men or were afraid of them. Most likely there was a mixture of both feelings. Matters remained like this till the last day of the month, when we were rejoiced, and, I think, the men astonished, to see the Buyuk Tchellaby ride up to the tent, accompanied by some mounted police and a horse with heavy saddle-bags. In spite of this, we heard through the canvas, the men assuring each other that it was only a *ruse*, and that they were going to be swindled by the dogs of English. Early next morning we were astir, and after breakfast, the Tchellaby, armed with a stout whip, stepped outside and addressed the men:—

'Well, my lads, what do you think of yourselves? you have behaved in a nice manner after agreeing to my offers!' but here he was cut short by a torrent of abuse, and a dozen ferocious-looking Turks and Tartars made a rush at him. He stepped back, and then like lightning came the hunting-whip among their outstretched hands, and at last on the head of the ringleader, one Anapey-oglu-Shimsheck (Anapey the son of lightning). There was a pause, and then, finding the attacked was becoming the aggressor, the entire mass

fled helter-skelter to the town, shouting out that they were all killed, and leaving the son of the electric parent on the ground with a hole in his crown. He soon thought it as well to pick himself up, and then, with a hasty salaam to us, skedaddled after his comrades. We got out the books, arranged the money, and then sent Mehmet to call the men together. It was hours before they came, and they would not then have done so had they not been driven by the Zaptiehs. The last to receive his money was our friend with the cracked skull, who then said to us, 'Gentlemen, I have behaved as a child. I have lost a fortnight's work and a quantity of blood. You are all-powerful, and I am convinced all-good. Have mercy on a fool and allow him to work for you again, and pay him according to his behaviour.'

'Very well, so be it; but if you forget yourself again, there will be no pay for you at the end of the month.'

From this time till the line was completed, Anapey worked for us at constantly increasing pay, which he well earned by his skill and perseverance; and, when last I saw him, he told me he had invested his not inconsiderable savings in a wife, a house, six bullocks, three cows, and a small flock of sheep. He would often, in joke, show the white mark in his shaven crown, and say 'that was the door the Buyuk Tchellaby opened for the devil to come out of!' And so ended the first and last row we had with our Turkish workmen.

CHAPTER XIV.

Partridge-shooting—An upset—A 'Times' correspondent—Native navvies—Jack Striver—A piercing eye—The magazine and its occupants.

BOULBY had brought with him from Constantinople a brace of really good English setters, and, as often as we could manage it, we went out shooting; and rare sport we had, though the excessive heat made it hard work for both men and dogs; but with three large coveys marked down in the rough grass on Trajan's wall, and the dogs again standing in the open, who could think of that! Sometimes Mehmet rode behind us with the game bags, and then we commenced near home, and shot our way out for miles; at other times we hired a teleki or light springless cart, belonging to the Jew Jancho, and went farther afield; but wherever we went we always had good sport, and it was rare indeed when two guns bagged less than twenty brace of partridges. Besides these we also killed bustard and quail, but the hares we generally reserved for coursing. Our dogs were greatly puzzled by the number of land tortoises that were to be found in the grass, and, though they were as good a brace of dogs as ever ranged, they never got over standing them, and it was ludicrous to see

their look of disgust when they found out their mistake.

One day we were returning home in the cart, when, just as it was getting dark, I espied a flock of big bustard feeding. We instructed Jancho how to drive so as to get near them, and both of us made ready for a shot. They let us come within about eighty yards of them and then began to fly, so we each popped off a barrel at the nearest, without any result, except that both the ponies made a bolt of it, and one kicked and got his leg over the pole. Round and round we went in circles, and, for fear of accidents should we come to a smash, we lowered our guns out at the end of the cart, and then hung on like grim death. 'Hish, hish, purr, pur-r-r-r,' went Jancho without the smallest effect. At last a large ants' hill caught the wheel and over we went—men, dogs, cushions, lunch-baskets, and water-bottles in a mass, with the two horses kicking like demons in the midst. We were soon on our legs none the worse for our tumble, and at once set to work to liberate the horses and raise the waggon. When this was done, it was quite dark, and, after searching for our guns for an hour, we had to give up and leave them till the next morning, when we returned on horseback and found them uninjured. On the days when the setters needed rest, we took out the greyhounds and had some famous coursing. The hares of these plains are very fast, and often the only cover is a long way from where they are found; when this is the case they are sure to be strong ones. If near the sea, the hare

generally makes for the cliffs and is at once lost on the rough face; at other times it runs for the many foxes' earths, and I have seen as many as four hares go down one in the day. We would not attempt to get them out, as we thought they had earned their shelter, and I hope Reynard, if at home, was kind and hospitable to his visitors.

Poor Boulby stopped with us for three weeks, and then, with many a cheery last word and parting joke, left us to return to Constantinople. Little we thought, as we watched him wending his way up the hill, that it would be the last we should ever see of him, or what awful trials the poor fellow was journeying to meet! Soon after this he was recalled from Constantinople and sent out to China (where we had one of our 'little wars' on hand) as special correspondent to the 'Times.' Shortly after arriving there he was carried off by a set of fiends who tortured him to death. We often thought afterwards of his having said one night, as he sat with us in the tent, listening to the threats of the mutinous workmen, that he could conceive nothing worse than falling into the hands of a lot of infuriated Tartars and being at their mercy. His death was talked of by all Europe, but by no one was he regretted more deeply than by his friends on the Dobrudja.

We were now very busy, and what with superintending the earthworks, making surveys of the bay for the intended harbour, discharging materials from ships in the open roadsteads, keeping the books and making the pays, we often went to bed thoroughly tired out;

but it was a glorious change after our summer of idleness, and we were always ready to buckle to with a will.

For men who were totally unused to the work and the tools they handled, our labourers did well, and we had already made a mark on the face of nature that would take a lot of rubbing out, even if we were now to abandon the undertaking.

From the harbour, the line crept up the face of the sloping cliffs for about a mile, and then, taking a north-westerly direction, availed itself of the old Roman work and ran down the ditch of Trajan's wall for another mile. It was on this section that all the work was being done, and more than five hundred men were at work in gangs, each under its own chaoush or foreman. There were from twenty to thirty in a gang, and the different races kept separate as much as possible. Soon individuals began to distinguish themselves by industry or intelligence, and these were at once draughted and started as chaoushes themselves. We were about this time joined by Jack Striver—one of the most useful men that ever handled a pick, and one of the quaintest characters. He was a native of the county of Durham, and had passed all his early days among coal-pits and pitmen, but he was of so restless a nature he had never long confined himself to one sort of work. He was never known to be idle in his life, and never even seen to walk leisurely, but was just an incarnation of energy and restlessness. By disposition he was cheerful and friendly, and was liked by all, both Englishmen and

foreigners. He had no *mauvaise honte*, but was equally at home with an ambassador or a Tartar navvy. He had the pluck of a bull-dog, and how he escaped getting killed through his hardihood is a mystery! He was a good scholar, a sober man, and one of the most obliging in the world. For some years previous he had worked for my brother, and now came up to us as general foreman. In appearance he looked like a well-to-do farmer—short, thick-set, bow-legged, broad-shouldered, and the picture of strength and hardness. I always had a feeling that should he be hit on the head with a pickaxe, the tool would be spoilt as if you had struck it on iron. But it took one a long time to see all this, for on first acquaintance one's attention was riveted on his eye. I say *eye*, for though he had two, one was nowhere, the other was a piercer! It revolved on an independent axis, and I defy anyone to tell when it was looking at you; and yet, as long as you were with him, you *felt* it was there and took in everything. There was no getting away from it, and it was so restless that it even moved the Turks, and while it was near them they worked with a feverish excitement! I never knew but one man that ever attempted to brave it, when it was fixed for a moment in anger. He was a gigantic Bosnian whose feelings had been hurt by being told he handled a pick like a woman, and from a few chaffing words lost his temper, and, thinking such a little fellow could be easily squashed, flew at Jack's throat; but I can't describe the scene half as well as Jack used in his droll laughing way.

'Well, sir, he just sproong at me, so I put out my

fist and clashed him in the e'e; he sproong again, so I clashed him doon, and then, as he would na' get up, I gave him a few bats for falling.'

For this and like affairs, Jack was always getting into rows, but he tumbled out of them with as much ease and as little care as he got into them. I am really glad I did not make Jack's acquaintance till he was a middle-aged man with a large family to give him ballast. When young with his wild oats to sow he must have been awful!

From the moment 'the eye' was on the works new life sprang up, and the work went on like magic—yet there was more cheerfulness among the men and everyone looked pleased when Jack made his appearance.

The end of October was near, and the great fish storm might be expected in a few days. Dreading the effect it might have on our workmen, if not provided with shelter, we hired a large corn-magazine from the Government, and got all our men under cover. Some years before, this magazine had sheltered a different and a quieter host. For in it one half of the French light horse under General Espinasse had died, while on a reconnoitring excursion from Varna. They had had a long march in the broiling sun, and, when within four miles of Kustendjie, they came on a small lake near the sea. It was shallow, and the water brackish and stinking from decayed vegetable matter; but they were parched with thirst, and their officers did not interfere to stop them. Half of them turned away from the

putrid fluid; but the others drank greedily of it, and, of those that did so, nearly all were left lying stark and naked on the floor of this magazine.

It was with some misgivings that we allowed such a motley crew to take up their quarters under the same roof; but nothing could be done beyond settling the Christians at one end and the Turks at the other, and reading them a lecture on brotherly love. All went well for a time, but one night R—— and I were awakened by the most frightful howls and yells. We slipped on our clothes, and, guided by the noise, were soon at the big doors, and I shall never forget the weird scene we discerned by the fitful light of a few torches stuck on the walls. Three hundred men in one confused heap were fighting and tearing at one another like wild beasts. Curses, threats, and cries for mercy, all mingled together, made us stand paralysed for a moment; but not so with Jack Striver, who appeared on the scene at the same moment with nothing on but a short night-shirt, and a stout stick in his hand. In a moment he was in the thick of it, shouting in Turkish, 'Oh, my children, my lambs, my lovely darlings! You like fighting, do you? so do I. Nothing like it, especially when you are on the top. Come on, don't give up, keep the fun going. You won't have any more, won't you? that's hard on me who came late; let me know when you are rested and you'll find me ready! Ah, you are going to return to your virtuous couches, and so am I, and by Allah, if I am disturbed again, there will be work for the grave-

digger in the morning. Good night, dears, and pleasant dreams; but before I go I will just take away your lights—they are dangerous with children.' All was quiet in a minute, and during the long winter there was no further outbreak.

CHAPTER XV.

Under a roof—A winter's ride—A night in a Bulgar hut—Pretended poverty—Seven in a bed—A suspicious companion—Kind friends.

HAVING housed our men, we next turned our attention to procuring some better protection against the winter storms and cold than our rag of canvas, and we were the more anxious to do so as we had lately been playing 'buckets in a well' with ague, one up and the other down. At first all our overtures to the Turks (who were the only possessors of anything like decent houses) were rejected; but, as we must have one somehow, we at last applied a golden key to the locks of their hearts. By giving about the original cost of the building for one year's hire, a cottage was had of Salim Bey, the head of the police. We had now been in our tent seven months, and lately it had been so cold we were obliged to go to bed at sundown to get warm. It was therefore with feelings of unmixed pleasure that we saw the tent lines slacked for the last time, and the tent carried off to its winter quarters. Our few goods were removed to the cottage, and after a long day's work we repaired to our new home. The house stood in a good-sized yard surrounded by high walls, on one side of which was a

kitchen and two small bedrooms. The kitchen and one room were made over to Clianthe, and the Buyuk Tchellaby took the other for his bedroom. The house proper was raised four feet from the ground, and was entered by a flight of steps leading on to a verandah, from which opened the front door. There were only two rooms—the entrance-hall and a good-sized room through it, which latter served as our sitting-room.

A hoarding of boards across the entrance-room left space enough for our two camp-beds and a washing-stand, and would not have been a bad little corner had there been any light in it. As it was, we had to come to the front door to see to shave and do the fancy part of our toilet, or else have a candle. The furniture in the sitting-room, when we arrived, consisted of a rickety deal table on the longest and leanest legs ever seen, and generally resembling poor Smike in the pictures of Dotheboys Hall in 'Nicholas Nickleby,' then a divan running half way round the room, and our two low camp-chairs. Not much luxury here, you would say—but wait till you have spent seven months in a tent, and then express your opinion! All I can say is, that in all my life before and since I never experienced such a feeling of comfort, and we sat up till the small hours, disinclined to tear ourselves away from it; and even after we were tucked up in bed, we revelled in the stillness, and were thankful to be away from the everlasting wind and the flapping of the tent eaves. A few days later we received a big box of winter clothes from England, the crevices of which were stuffed with knitted

waistcoats, muffatees, and other warm and comfortable reminders of friends at home. Besides this a cartload of furniture arrived; and when we had our carpets down and our curtains up, our iron stove fixed, and a dinner-service on the table, with actually a white cloth under it, a vision of tail-coats and white ties for a moment passed before our mind's eye, and we felt quite a reverence for our snug little room.

The winter wore on, with here a day's work and there a day's sport, till shortly before Christmas, when I was called to Varna on business. Wrapping myself up in foxes' and sheep skins, and followed by Mehmet, I started forth and did the weary journey of a hundred miles over the great snow desert in two days. I missed our regular halting house, having changed my road for the sake of a little variety, and at nightfall found myself obliged to stop at a Bulgar shepherd's hut. There were about a dozen dirty men and one repulsively ugly woman in the establishment, which consisted of but one room opening out of the sheepfold, the floor of which was inches deep in filth brought in by the shepherds' naked feet. Travellers, like beggars, cannot be choosers, so we make the best of it and congratulate ourselves on our numerous hosts being very hospitable and civil. We sup on damper and sheep's milk, and soon after stretch ourselves on the floor for the night. Being the honoured guest, I have the place opposite the fire with the dying embers to warm my feet. All the others, from the smallness of the room, are obliged to pack close round me, on either side and at my head. In a few minutes a nasal chorus proclaims

that all are sleeping, and after a few fitful dreams and starts, I am also safe in the arms of Morpheus. Somewhere about the middle of the night, I am disturbed by feeling something moving quite slowly about the corners of my mouth, as if it wished to force an entrance. I keep quiet and try to think what it can be. Am I yet dreaming? No, I think not, for I don't think I ever remember a smell in a dream, and, whatever this thing may be that feels like a toad's back, it certainly has a peculiar odour. I make a sudden snatch, intending to catch what I supposed was some reptile, and throw it across the room. There was a piercing scream, and then all woke up, and all talked at once, and it was some moments before a light could be procured and an explanation given. It then turned out that I had grabbed the big toe of the woman, which unconsciously she had let stray nearly into my mouth. The owner looked at me most suspiciously, and so did some of the men; but others laughed at my face of horror, and assured me that, even supposing the toe *had* been thrust into my mouth, it could not have poisoned me. I did not feel so sure of this myself. But there was no use in making a fuss about it, and so to sleep again; but before doing so I see the woman changing places with a young Bulgar in a far corner.

A couple of days sufficed for my business at Varna, during which time I availed myself of the services of an old German doctor and had a double tooth extracted with his *clef Anglais*, which at the same time relieved me of a good big splinter from my jaw. I then started

on my return journey, and as Mehmet's horse was lame, and I now felt myself a perfect traveller, I left him behind. The result was I lost my way, and, after wandering till after dark and being nearly perished with cold, I arrived by good luck in a poverty-stricken Bulgar village, and had to content myself with sharing a small room with a man, his wife, and a lot of little children, who at first looked at me very much in the same way that English young ones would if a bear were introduced into their nursery.

I soon made friends with the man, when in the course of conversation it came out that he was not nearly as poor as he looked; but, this village being so near a frequented road, no one dare appear have anything, or the Turks would take it from them. When he had made a little more money, he intended moving to Varna and opening a shop, as he would there have the moral protection of the Russian Consul.

When I expressed a wish for sleep, I was told there was but one set of bedding in the house, but that I was quite welcome to share it with the family. I thought it best to make no bones about it, so I stretched myself out in the middle of the bed with the husband and boys on one side of me, and the wife and girls on the other, and was soon fast asleep. After this can I ever feel anything but kindly towards a Bulgar? What English paterfamilias would do as much for an entire stranger? My ride the next day was the coldest I ever had. There was a piercing wind from the north, and the thermometer must have been far below zero. Then the roads,

or tracks, were so rough, and frozen so hard, that it was like riding over broken bricks, and it was quite impossible to get on fast. In the afternoon I was joined by a curious-looking individual. He was a Bulgar, dressed in European clothes; that is to say, a pair of knee-breeches and butcher boots appeared beneath his sheep-skin coat, and altogether he looked more like an English gipsy than a Bulgar farmer, which he stated himself to be. He said he knew Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, and had dined at his table, and mentioned many other well-known people! By-and-by my road branched to the right from his, and he then assured me I was going miles out of my way, and that, if I would accompany him, he would set me right. I allowed myself to be persuaded, and, after we had proceeded a little way, he remarked on my carrying a pistol, and sneered at my doing so, as there were no robbers on the plains, and ended by asking as a favour to be allowed to examine it. I did not quite see this, but I *did* see that he had a villanous expression, and I was convinced he was leading me at right angles to the direction I wanted to go. I at once made up my mind, and to his astonishment wished him a pleasant ride, and trotted off to the right, hoping soon to recover my old road. The sun went down, and in a few minutes it was dark, and colder than ever, and I must say I felt most miserable, and thought I had every prospect of being frozen to death. There was not a particle of shelter, and the wind seemed to drive through my coverings as if I were in a sieve; and, to make matters worse, I soon

began to feel overpowered with drowsiness. Looking back to that night, I am sure I was never nearer death than I was then. It seemed to me that I had ridden on and on for hours, when suddenly my horse stopped at the door of a hut, and, on giving a shout, it was opened and a dozen heads appeared. I told my tale and asked for shelter; but was told this was the only hut, and that it was already so over-full there was not room for all to sit down. I begged hard to be allowed just to come in and warm myself; but no, they would not allow it. At last one man came out, and pointing due east, said, 'Ride in that direction for an hour, and, if you do not miss it, you will come to a Turkish village.'

Yes, 'if!' My life depended on that 'if;' but I would make a struggle for it; so getting to the leeward side of my horse I hobbled on as fast as I could, and before long my blood began to circulate a little more freely. The night was very dark, and the ground hard and rough, and during the last hour I got many a bad fall, and was bruised and sore all over, and at last my feet were so painful I was forced to drag myself once more into the saddle. I pushed on my poor weary little beast for an hour or so more, and then, thank God, I smelt burning manure, and knew there was a village, or at all events heat, somewhere to the windward, and, bearing in that direction, I soon came to the sheds of a village.

After shouting for some minutes and being answered by a score of village dogs, a door at last opened and I was told to approach. On doing so I found myself

confronted by a lot of young Turks, who, on hearing I was cold, hungry, and lost, at once ushered me into a steaming hot room, while one of their number took my horse. I must have been nearly frozen, for I shall never forget the pain of coming round. My hands, feet, nose, and ears seemed as if they were in a vice, and for the first half hour I could only sit and rock myself in agony. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness of my friends. They took off my boots, rubbed my feet, and did their best to revive me, making me drink about a dozen cups of hot coffee within the half hour. It was the best thing in the world for me, and the heat I thus imbibed warmed all my blood, and I was able to get into the stable and see to my horse. He had been well cared for—was covered with warm rugs, had his nose in about a bushel of barley, and looked the picture of contentment.

A great wooden bowl of boiled milk with inch-cubes of mutton swimming in it, was soon placed on the floor, and we all sat round it and pegged away. First we bobbed in the mess for the floating solids with our fingers, and as mine would not stand the scalding heat, I should have fared badly, had it not been for the kind assistance of a nigger slave who fished for me. When the meat was all caught and devoured, we drank the milk with a huge wooden spoon, but, there being only one, we had to take it turn and turn about. Supper over, and a cigarette smoked, I was soon fast asleep on the floor cheek by jowl with my nigger friend. When asked by kind English hostesses in snug English houses

if I can eat this or that, or sleep on such and such a bed, I recall this and other similar journeys, and unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative. Early next day I was safe in our little cottage home, but it was some days before I had recovered the effects of my wretched journey.

CHAPTER XVI.

Christmas cheer—A plum pudding—'Chasseurs de dimanches'—A perfect pointer—How dogs are spoilt—Mad dogs—Cossack pony—A ghost.

CHRISTMAS DAY was now drawing near, and as the nice seasonable weather had shut up the works, and we had nothing to do, we determined to go in for hospitality, and give a dinner-party!

Besides ourselves, there were now two European gentlemen in the town—Monsieur Bichelet, a Frenchman, who had a post on the line; and Monsieur Karl, a Polish refugee, in the service of the Turkish Government. Invitations were issued to them and accepted, and then all our energies were concentrated on the dinner. For two days we roamed the plains, trying to shoot a big bustard to take the place of a turkey, but it was not till the third morning that we had any success. We then discovered that by stationing ourselves in one of the far cuttings we were just in the line of flight of the flocks passing south, and in less than an hour we had bagged five fine birds. The *pièce de resistance* being thus secured, we next foraged through the town for materials for a plum pudding, and consulted with Mrs. Jack Striver as to the way of making

one. Her ideas on the subject were somewhat foggy, but she gave us one bit of valuable advice that we followed. 'You can't boil it too long.' Plums, currants, buffalo fat, sugar, flour, milk, and eggs, in indiscriminate quantities, were puddled together in our washing basin, and then secured safely in the corner of a pillow-case, and put in a huge pot (borrowed for the purpose from our Jew neighbours), and there kept a-boiling for twenty-four hours! We had an anxious time of it, and our peace and brotherly love were nearly brought to an end by my discovering R—— at one o'clock in the morning with the pudding on the table and the bag open, 'just tasting it, to see how it was getting on.' He assured me this was positively necessary, and that no pudding would ever cook without being properly tasted, and he had often seen it done. My confidence in him was greatly shaken, and I would only be pacified by an agreement being drawn up by which neither of us should enter the kitchen without the other. The honour of England was at stake, and we could not take too much care! Besides the bustard, we had a piece of baked buffalo, and three or four light dishes, which Clianthe concocted. Care and anxiety almost wore us to threads, and neither of us had a moment's happiness till the pudding was placed on the table. But then was not our labour rewarded! Did anyone ever see such a beauty! Round as a ball (except one squashy corner where R—— had dug a hole in its side), and so rich, and so full of plums that it was a wonder where all the other ingredients had

found a place; but they were all there, and when we had set it on fire with brandy we pronounced it A1, and from the look of our guests I am sure they had an increased respect for the great British lion! All care was at once banished; and when cigarettes were lighted, a bottle of brandy and two of marsala placed on the table, with hot water and lemons, there were not four merrier companions in the world. We drank the health of all absent friends, and at that moment it would have been curious could we have followed the flight of each other's minds. The Frenchman, I fancy, was gone to a pretty peaceful little town in the south of France, where his father, a much respected and much red-taped Government official, was perhaps entertaining his friends; whilst M. Karl, I imagine, was beside a desolate deserted farm in the pine forests of Poland, where his boyhood had been spent with two elder brothers, who, if alive, were now far away over the dreary Russian Steppes, on the ice-bound shores of Siberia, dragging out their weary lives in banishment for having loved their home and country too well. The minds of us Britishers had fled over Europe, through London, down the eastern counties, and were quietly ensconced in a cosey parsonage dining-room, listening to the old rector giving the health of his boys in Turkey. Ah, well! the world is only a small place after all, time flies quickly, and please God at a not far distant date we may be sitting with you, telling of how we made our first plum pudding.

I cannot quite remember how we finished that jovial

evening; but I have a firm conviction that we all sang 'Partant pour la Syrie,' and that it would have been better if we had some of us known the words or air.

Putting Englishmen out of the question (for fear of being thought prejudiced), the Poles are the best sportsmen with a gun I have ever seen, and next to them rank the Austrians. There are doubtless some Frenchmen who understand the thing, but it has never been my luck to meet one that did not deserve the name given them by the Poles, 'Chasseurs de dimanches.' I once had a bitter quarrel with a noble Count in a country village in Italy, because I refused him permission to 'chasse' the only pair of blackbirds to be seen for miles round, which were nesting in my garden, and he had discovered them by the song of the cock bird. It was hard of me, for he was all prepared for the slaughter, having dressed himself in a shooting-coat with at least twenty pockets, knickerbockers and leather gaiters all up his legs, fastened with endless straps and buckles. He had a double-barrelled gun, slung on his back by a green cord with long tassels, and a game-bag big enough to hold thirty brace of partridges.

M. Karl was a good shot with both gun and rifle, he was cool and patient, and could walk for ever. He told us that, when first he came to Turkey, he supported himself for two years by shooting roe-deer and other game in the Baba Dagh (Father Mountains) and selling them at Galatz. A year or two before we made his acquaintance, he had had a small puppy given him by an English merchant captain, and it turned out a

splendid-looking English pointer. It had naturally a good nose, but it was constant training that had made it the most perfect dog I ever shot over. From the time he first had it, he never let it out of his sight day or night, and was always talking to it and teaching it tricks, and I am sure it would have earned a man a good living by exhibiting in London or Paris. It apparently understood all that was said to it, and M. Karl had only to say, 'Well, we will be off shooting,' for the dog to seize his slippers from his feet, take them into his bedroom and bring his boots. Whilst ranging it kept its eye on its master, and a wave of the hand would change its swift pace to a slow careful trot; then if the hand were held up, it dropped at once, and would have remained there till it was starved, if its master had not given it a sign to go on. I once saw M. Karl point out a flock of bustards, and then say a few words in Polish. Away went 'Black,' and, making a wide circuit, drove them up over our heads as we lay concealed in the grass. From morning till night no correction was needed, and M. Karl told me that he had never once struck the dog.

Our English pointers and setters are naturally splendid dogs, or there would not be so many good ones, in spite of the careful way we do our best to spoil them. In nine cases out of ten, from the time they are puppies, they are shut up in some back yard, rarely exercised or spoken to, and scarcely thought of. When old enough to gallop, each dog is handed over to a conceited ignorant keeper (I beg you observe the expression), *to break*;

and well he does his work. His only idea is to swear at it and thrash it in a brutal manner, and, when he has run up its owner a long bill for food the poor starved beast never gets, reports that 'it ain't the lessest mossel of good, and never will be;' and so the poor animal, that under the gentle and careful training of a M. Karl would have probably turned out a wonder, is shot and thrown on the muck heap. Because dogs in England are never properly trained, we are debarred from seeing them work. Except on the moors, they are hardly ever used; and the end of it is we have to do the dogs' work ourselves, by plodding over the stubbles and wet turnips, and in the end getting poor bags. Of course I am not speaking of such places as West Norfolk, where the birds swarm, and where it would be about as sensible to take a dog out, as it would be to ride a horse out rat-catching, but not such good sport.

I have known two dogs in England that equalled 'Black,' both belonging to one man and trained in the same manner that 'Black' was. One was a mongrel collie, and the other a setter, whose life had been begged for in the field just as its owner was going to shoot it, because, after spending 5*l.* on its breaking, it was such a useless brute. I myself heard 20*l.* offered and refused for this dog when it was old and had not two seasons' work in it.

I have often seen it stated that dogs in Turkey never go mad. How such a fallacy can have originated I cannot imagine, for they certainly do go mad in numbers. I had already shot two or three village dogs,

and my own terrier, unmistakably suffering from hydrophobia, and now I had another promising young dog, half foxhound, half pointer, seized; and, as some of my readers may not know the earlier symptoms, I will tell what I then observed. For some days the dog looked ill and lost all spirit, it retired under old boxes and into other strange places, and was ever restless and unhappy. Then it took to eating dirt, sticks, and straws. Its eyes first became bloodshot and then began to squint, and at this stage the dog disappeared for two days, but appeared again at night on the verandah, and had a deep hollow cough that when once heard could never be forgotten. Feeling sure something was wrong, I took the precaution of looking at it through a window before going out, and there I saw him standing in the moonlight. He was looking in a wistful way hard at the wall, with his head turning first on one side and then on the other, much in the way a terrier will when he hears a rat in a hole. Every few minutes he snapped at some imaginary object, and he continued to cough constantly. When I spoke to him, he wagged his tail and came forward a little way, but the next moment seemed to forget his intentions. I procured an iron basin with water, and when he was a little way off I slipped it out of the door, and then going to the window again called him to it. He showed no dread of it, but, on the contrary, I should say he was driven furious by his desire to drink. He snapped at the water, howled, and then seized the basin and bit it till I heard his teeth breaking. The sight was so pitiable that I

fetched my gun, and, opening a crack in the door, put an end to the poor thing's agony.

I have lost several valuable dogs, but I am sure I have saved many others that have been bitten, by following exactly the instructions given by Youatt. Whenever I have seen one of my dogs bitten, I have carefully marked the part, and as quickly as possible have shaved the hair from it, lanced the wound or wounds, and then burned them with caustic. Twice over I have had two dogs bitten at the same time, one of which I treated thus, and left the other to take its chance; and each time the dog I burned with caustic has not gone mad and the other has, and I feel sure that in man or beast if the wounds were all at once cauterised to the bottom, hydrophobia would rarely supervene.

During this winter I had a jolly little pony sent me from Constantinople whose history was rather a curious one. Many of my readers may remember a passage in Mr. Russell's account of the Crimean War, in which he says that, during the night after the battle of Alma, the English camp was aroused by the charge of a lot of Cossack ponies that had broken from their picket and galloped into their midst: well, my new acquisition was one of these. It was captured by a private and sold to an officer in the morning for a glass of grog, and, after having been ridden all through the siege, was taken to Constantinople and handed to the man who gave it to me. He had kept it till now, but could hardly ever ride it, as it ran away every time it was mounted, and more

than once he came to grief in the narrow streets of Stamboul. Thinking the Dobrudja would be a fine field on which he might indulge his propensity with less danger, he was shipped off to me, and thus became the property of his last master; for, after riding him some years, I turned him out with a herd of mares and let him end his days as a horse should. He was a plucky little beast, under fourteen hands high, but anything but a pleasant hack; for not only did he run away, but he was never known to walk a step, and would dance and fidget through the longest day. He had changed hands several times, and had only cost a glass of grog. Though given to me, I did not gain by him, for, owing to his fretting, tiresome ways, I never got on him without a most serious loss of temper.

Buyuk Tchellaby was away a great part of this winter, during which time R—— slept in his room to take charge of a money chest which was placed there. Between this room and the main house was a door opening into an inner yard about fifteen feet square, the walls of which were at least twenty feet high, and the tops of them covered with loose mortar and stones. The only thing in the yard was a small circular wicker-work house, formerly used to keep hens in. One bright night after we had been in bed two hours, R——, who had not been asleep, was astonished to see the shadow of a man on the window, and on jumping up he saw a tall figure walk quietly into the small yard. He kept his eye on the door through which it had passed, seized his gun, and opening the window stepped quietly out,

and then I heard him calling me. I ran out of the house, and he then said, 'Slip on your trowsers, and get your gun; I have cornered a man here, and will keep guard on him till you come.' I was soon back and took up guard while R—— retired to don his 'never-mention-ums;' for let all my fair readers know, that no man can fight without this garment, be he ever such a hero. Little by little we pushed open the door and peeped into the yard; then, one going each way, we marched round the small house, but no one was there. He must be inside the little house; but, not being terriers and accustomed to drawing badgers, we first addressed the supposed brigand and threatened to fire through the frail sides. But there was no response; so, mustering up courage, we thrust open the door, but to our amazement there was nothing to be seen, nor did a closer inspection with a candle discover any signs of him. We looked all round the walls, and not a stone nor a piece of mortar had fallen, which must have happened if anyone had scaled them. So after I had made a few sarcastic remarks on people who see more than their neighbours, and had some snaps from R—— in return, we retired to our beds, feeling very cold and very much like fools. To this day R—— flares up if one suggests he was dreaming, or that he did *not* see a man walk in at that door. I am not superstitious; but, as neither Maskelyne nor Cooke was starring it at Kustendjie just then, it was, to say the least, *very uncanny.*

CHAPTER XVII.

A Cossack colony—A double shipwreck.

One day we rode down to the big lake, and, leaving our horses at a small village on its shore, we started on foot over the frozen waters to visit a colony of Cossacks that were settled on a small island in the middle. They appeared very glad to see us, and the Father of the Colony invited us in to his conical-shaped hut, formed of reeds, and round the inside circle of which ran a low divan made of wickerwork, and covered with rush. There was an open hearth in the middle, and the smoke escaped out of a small hole left at the top. When standing up it was rather stifling; but it was not so bad when sitting down, with the triangle-shaped door wide open. We were soon visited by as many men as could squat all round without incommoding us, and, as each one did so, he muttered some words and crossed himself. They all spoke good Turkish, and most of the younger ones, we were told, had been born there. They spoke with great pride of Russia, and the Czar they evidently looked upon as a sort of god. When we asked why they had left such a good land and master, they said they were very poor there, and

had come here to seek bread. At the same time an uncomfortable look came over their faces which plainly said that was not all, and I suspect the conscription in Russia had more to do with it. Without exception these Cossacks are the finest men I have ever seen. I picked out the shortest and placed myself by his side, and I am sure he was quite six feet high, and many of the others must have been six feet three or four inches. They were all splendidly proportioned, and looked like a race of giants. They were very fair, with immensely long and thick mustachios, and beards of shades varying from flaxen to auburn. They were well dressed in a sheepskin cap, close-fitting wadded waistcoat with sleeves made of thick blue linen or lambskin, loose baggy trowsers of the former material tucked into a pair of very strong knee-boots, under which, I fancy, in winter they wear sheepskin drawers. Altogether they were a fine, useful-looking set of men, and we coveted them for our works. They were fishermen, and were employed at their business all the year—the men out in their boats, and the women and children salting and drying the spoil in the sun. A ready market was found at all the fairs, where the fish was bought by the Christians for food, especially during Lent and on fast days. The Cossacks told us they rarely eat anything but fish themselves; and if *they* are the result of such food, we can't do better than feed our young recruits on it at once!

The women, to our taste, were far inferior to the men in beauty, but were all very large and active, and

would themselves make a likely regiment of Amazons. They were dressed in shapeless blue cotton gowns tied tight in at the waist, with no head-covering beyond a small handkerchief twisted round the plaits of their long hair, and then placed round the head in the form of a coronet. Some few had boots on like the men; but most were barelegged from just below the knee, where the petticoats ended. The children were all very pretty, and much resembled some of our blue-eyed little ones in England, but taking them age for age they were certainly much bigger. We had filled our pockets before starting with Turkish sweets, and when these appeared, shyness fled, and we were soon great heroes, and were pulled about and inspected as if we ourselves might be good to eat. The old folks were greatly scandalised at such behaviour, and would have sent the small fry flying, had we not interfered and assured them we liked it.

As these Cossacks are one of the finest races in Europe, so are they, I believe, one of the least known; and had I the power there is nothing I should like better than ferreting out their early history, and making myself acquainted with their every-day life and habits, feeling assured I should pass an enjoyable time and learn enough to repay me for the pleasant hardships I should have to go through. But I know so little of these interesting people, that I shall not venture to say more of them, but content myself with recommending some of the many who travel over the world to look them up and learn all about them, be-

ginning with one of the most singular of all their various tribes, the coachmen who monopolise the public carriages in Wallachia.

Before finishing our visit to the Cossacks we had to 'eat salt,' and were not too proud to finish off a good dish of fish fried in oil, rather rancid, and tasting much as I should think a tin of bad sardines would if boiled and swallowed hot. We then had some weak tea *à la Russe*; that is, with a slice of lemon floating in it, and no milk or sugar. There is one item in the preparation of all food in Turkey which is not necessarily mentioned, but is never by any chance left out. It requires habit and long practice to get accustomed to it, and the English taste never learns to like it. I mean the *dirt* that creeps into *every* dish.

Before we had constructed the harbour at Kustendjie, there was no port between the mouth of the Bosphorus and the Crimea for which a ship could make in a storm. And yet the Black Sea bears a bad name with sailors, and deservedly so, for it is swept by the north and north-east winds direct from the Steppes of Russia, and the short chopping seas rise very rapidly, and are far more dangerous than the long swell of the Atlantic, though the latter may run three times as high. At Bourgas, Varna, Cape Kalachria, and Kustendjie, there are open roadsteads more or less protected by headlands to the east; but owing to the shallowness of the water near shore, and to their small dimensions, it is most dangerous for a ship to attempt to make them in a gale, and the skeletons of wrecks

protruding from the sands tell how often such attempts have failed. Whenever a heavy gale was blowing we kept a sharp look-out to seawards, and if an unfortunate ship appeared making for our point, all would be excitement for a while. I have often stood for hours behind a projecting rock on the extreme point, watching the short angry waves dashing and tearing at the rocks and throwing a white foam clear over the town into the bay on the other side. On one occasion a schooner had, at the commencement of a gale, succeeded in slipping round the point and coming to anchor in the middle of the roadstead, where she lay swinging at anchor all night. While we were finishing breakfast the next morning, Salim Bey put his head into the yard and called out that a ship was coming. We gave orders to the grooms to have two horses saddled and kept in readiness for us, and then we joined on the point a small group, composed chiefly of Greek boatmen, whose feluccas had run for the shelter of the point on the previous night. There close before us, and coming straight on for the point, was a good-sized brig, and we could easily distinguish the sailors clinging to the ropes and stays, while two of them were lashed to the rudder. In a few moments the ship appears to be actually on the rocks; but no, she just shaves them, and then shoots out into the bay and is now going about. Will she do it? Yes, there she comes round; but before her sails give a single flutter she falls off and has missed stays. And then, by Jove, she goes broadside on to the schooner, where all is terror and ex-

citement, and from the two vessels we hear the distant shouts of the unfortunate men. At that sudden shock the cables part, and if all the admirals of the British navy were on those ships their united seamanship could not save them, for in the little cramped bay there is no room, nor time, for anything to be done. But if the ships cannot be saved, perhaps the men can; so we mount our ponies and gallop round the bay, followed by the Greek sailors provided with ropes and lines. Thanks to the violence of the wind and sea, both ships have struck near the shore, and there they lay bumping and heaving like two huge sea monsters. Every time they strike, their masts quiver and shake, and we feel sure it will not be long before they are over the side. The crew can be seen clinging to ropes close under the upper bulwarks, and every wave that strikes the doomed ships souses them with its green water. Being land lubbers we can do nothing till the Greeks arrive, but, when they come, we rejoice to see they know what they are about. They climb some way up the sloping cliff, and then at once commence to drive in some long stakes they have with them, and affix a block. A few minutes later a cask is seen floating from one of the vessels, soon followed by one from the other, to both of which ropes are fastened. The sailors on shore quietly tie themselves on to a long line, the land end of which is passed in a loop round our horses' necks, and when the casks have drifted into the surf, they rush in and secure them, and we ride off, thus helping to pull all to land.

The ropes are passed through the block and drawn tight, and in a few moments a sailor from the schooner comes down it, and after an anxious interval is safe on land. He brings with him another line, which is soon arranged so that it travels backwards and forwards from the land to the ship. The entire crew is by this means landed, and the same gone through with the brig, with the exception that instead of a sailor coming from the ship to the land with the second line, one has to go from the land to the ship with it—the poor fellows on the brig being too cold for such a Blondin-like undertaking. An old hut on the beach, which had doubtless sheltered many such a bedrabbled crew, is taken possession of, and a good fire kindled. The men huddle round to warm themselves, and can here keep guard over the wrecks, and are ready to secure all that may come ashore. We hurried home, and, collecting some provisions, sent them off to the poor fellows. Before night both ships were complete wrecks, and the beach for miles strewn with their broken timbers. Judging by the rotten appearance of these, it puzzled us to think how men could be found hardy enough to venture in such wretched craft. It is bad enough when the ship is new and well built, but in these rotten old tubs the odds must be against their ever reaching land each time they put to sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Spring—At work in earnest—The roving English navvy—Drink—'Tommy'—Roman fortifications—An enterprising baker—Roman barrows—Roman antiquities.

THE dark dreary winter, with all its accompanying horrors of snow, frost, wind, frozen men, and painful journeys, was over, and spring was once more with us. And such a spring! not one of those mongrels, half summer, half winter, exhibiting in turn the worst traits of each parent, which we know so well in England; but a beautiful fresh cheery young summer, that from its birth till it comes of age is all smiles and happiness. In a few days all nature has put on a new garb, and the great grass plains are a perfect blaze of early flowers, which will go on increasing in splendour till the burning rays of the summer sun begin to scorch them up, and convert the lovely verdure into a parched and thirsty desert. The work we had been able to do up to this time, might be looked on as only the preliminary canter before the great steeple chase; but now the flags were down, the horses off, and we soon settled into our rapid but hard work, thankful to be allowed our heads and eager to meet and surmount our worst fences.

Early in the spring a staff of Englishmen had arrived

to superintend the office work and finance departments, and, I think very wisely, *young* men had been chosen; for, as on a long journey, a man thinks little at first of rough fare and even great hardships, which, later on, when travel-stained and tired, will make him shirk his journey and seek for rest, so it is with life (which is only a long journey of another sort): provided a man is competent, he will, when young, buckle to with energy and even go out of his way to seek work, which at a later age, when the romance of labour has somewhat worn off, he would do his utmost to escape.

These were followed by blacksmiths and carpenters, and then one by one came drifting in that most curious of all classes of workmen—the roving English navvy. Most of these men were the sons of labourers, and had at an early age commenced work on some of the numerous lines then under construction in England, and, tempted by high wages and love of adventure, had followed some of their old masters over the water to begin a long career of labour in different parts of Europe. As soon as one piece of work was completed, and the money earned on it spent on drink, off they would tramp to fresh fields; but wherever they went and however long they remained abroad (few ever return home), they kept their individuality and were the 'navvy' with his many vices and some virtues. Shocking as it may be, drink was his moving power. For drink he had left his home and friends, for drink he worked and slaved, for drink he lived, and by drink he would die. Money with him is only looked upon as desirable

because it will procure drink, and never, as with other people, for itself, or for the numerous comforts and luxuries it will procure. Drink includes all these, and 'Thank God there is nowhere it can't be got. If I ain't to have a skinful after I have toiled and moiled for months, blow me if I ever work agin, but I 'll just clam, and the sooner the underground navvies are at work on me the better—them's my ideas.' Yes, and those are the ideas of half the Englishmen that get their bread by the sweat of their brow. The parson looks askance at John Hodge for being drunk, and thinks he has given way to, or been overcome by, temptation. Bless your Reverence, nothing of the sort: he has for once been able to grasp the reward of a life of labour, and 'if wages are "haighened" a bit, please God I shall oftener be able to do so.' When you, Mr. Parson, were moved from your poor curacy to your snug rectory and for the first time had a nice little balance in the local bank, you thanked God for it, because now you could give your good little wife more comfort, have your numerous small family (you know you have a lot) well educated, help the widows and orphans in their affliction, and make a more useful labourer in your Master's vineyard. You may also thank God you have these desires, and that generation after generation of toil and misery has not warped and dwarfed your best wishes down to 'summat to drink.' Hodge has just been able to put the screw on old Mangel Wurzel your churchwarden, who has raised his wages from 12*s.* to 14*s.* per week, and knows nicely that there are in these two extra shillings

just six quarts of fourpenny beer, and 'Please God he will have them on pay night.'

After drink comes 'Tommy' with the navvy, and, as long as his digestive organs resist the poison he drinks, he eats like a wolf, and always of the very best he can get. He is not particular as to the cooking, but will have fresh joints and plenty of them, and often at one sitting disposes of more animal food than the labourer in Norfolk or Suffolk gets in a year. In whatever place he finds himself, he is at home, and is never unhappy, except when out of work, which is not often the case. He is most civil and obliging, but at the same time most independent, and if he takes it into his head that he has not been fairly dealt by, he will express his feelings in, to say the least of it, forcible language. He is always ready for a drink or a fight, and looks on a comrade that declines to do either as a 'werry poor crittur,' whose company had better be avoided. All foreigners he holds in contempt, and he never for a moment expects *them* to fight. 'They are no better than a lot of women, but like women require their "bats" from time to time.' All the people of the world are navvies of some sort, but a long way behind the 'muck navvy.' There are 'Bible navvies' (parsons), 'quill navvies' (clerks), 'sword navvies' (soldiers), 'squeal pipe navvies' (engine drivers), and so on to the end. Our 'muck navvy' cares little for death; but if it should happen (and it not infrequently does) that a mate 'gets nipped' on the works, and leaves a wife behind him, she will without doubt be taken care of,

and I have often known a whole month's pay to be handed over to a widow, and the pleasures of the debauch foregone. They never go to church, or show any sign of religion except on these occasions, when, if the man is not killed outright, a navvy with larning' will borrow a Bible and read till the man dies, and the part chosen is always out of the 'Revelations.' Then they are mighty particular about the funeral; all must be of the best, and done in the most approved manner, and the man who officiates counts without his host if he thinks he can leave out a word of the service. Directly the grave is approached everyone provides himself with a handful of earth, and eagerly watches the eye of a leader for a sign that the proper time has come to cast it on the coffin. From the anxiety they evince about it, I believe they think they are materially helping the poor dead man to gain a better world. An English gentleman of my acquaintance once devoted himself for some weeks during a virulent outbreak of cholera to nursing a lot of navvies. All, or nearly all, had fallen victims, and collapse had set in with the last patient, when the poor fellow raised himself up in bed and with his last breath said, 'Bust me, master, if you and I ever meet in Newcastle, it shan't be one glass of beer that shall part us.' They will never meet in Newcastle, but may we hope they will where better happiness than beer can give is to be found.

The English navvies were too useful, and their wages too high, for us to employ them as labourers, so they were sent to different sections to push on the work and

instruct the natives, and, before the spring was over, workmen were busy at every few miles along the line, and as there were no heavy undertakings, such as deep cuttings, tunnels, or viaducts, the work proceeded rapidly. I almost lived in the saddle and on the works, and soon became as sunburnt as a red Indian, and about as tough.

Besides the actual line we had a lot of building on hand. Houses had to be erected for ourselves, staff, and the numerous European workmen, and offices and shops put up for them to work in. The former were all placed in a large fenced-in field, or compound, of at least fifty acres, just at the base of the promontory, and commanding a fine sea-view—the latter, near the point where the harbour works had to be commenced. All were built of stone, most of which was procured by pulling down old fortifications and grubbing up the foundations of the numerous Roman buildings those enterprising people had left behind them hundreds of years before. From the sea-cliff on the east to a point in the Bay of Kustendjie, there ran an old Roman fortification about a mile long, cutting off the whole of the point and a good piece of land along the bay from the plains, thus making Kustendjie, in those days, quite secure from the attacks of the barbarians.

It consisted of a wall or ramp, built of stone about twelve feet thick on the top. It was not more than six feet high from the ground, but on the outer side a ditch twelve feet deep and about twelve feet wide had been thrown out, and the face of the wall (which was

all formed of hewn stone of three or four tons weight) carried to the bottom, so that an enemy would have to climb up eighteen feet before he could get on to the fortification. Near each end and in the centre there was a gateway about eight feet wide, and the stones that formed it weighed none of them less than five tons. I suppose these were closed by wooden doors, but of course these had disappeared. The stonework was set in mortar, very fine on the face, but little better than a mass of concrete and big stone on the inside. It was all so hard set by age that the stone itself often gave way under our pinch-bars and levers before the mortar.

One of our cuttings crossed this wall at right angles near the sea, and the rail level was fifteen feet below the foundations. We got the earth out plumb with the wall; but how could we excavate under it, without bringing the whole mass down on us? We held several consultations about it on the spot, and we were somewhat amused by one of our Bulgar workmen volunteering his opinion unasked. He had often distinguished himself by the splendid lissom way in which he swung his pick, and by the great amount of work he would get through in the day, and he now gave it as his opinion that there was no danger of the wall falling, even when the earth which supported it was removed. It *might* stand; but, if it did come down among a gang of men, there would be a horrid mess! No, we must move the men on, and wait till we can get some powder and blow it to pieces.

So it was arranged; but what was our astonishment,

on going up the line next morning, to find our Bulgar friend just finishing off a drift ten feet wide, which he had driven through under the concrete mass! There it stood, as rigid as a bar of iron, and intact! Not one stone had fallen, nor was there a sign of a crack in it. From end to end where loose earth supported it, it was twelve feet long, twelve feet on the top, and ten feet deep, all made of concrete, in which was mixed stones from ten to twelve inches square. The Bulgar, Ekmekji Georgey ('baker George,' for he was by trade a baker), got a rattling blowing up; but he never went back to the gang again as labourer, and was from this day made a general foreman under Jack Striver, and soon became one of the most useful and intelligent men we ever had.

Our trouble with the great bar of masonry was not by any means over, for though there was a road under we dare not use it, and it was far too hard to break up as it was. We drilled a hole in the centre, and put in a heavy charge of powder (all we could buy in the town); but, owing to the innumerable cracks and fissures, this, when fired, squandered its force, and only enlarged the drill-hole to about a foot diameter. Now a bright thought struck Jack Striver. He plastered round this hole with mud, and then the last thing at night he filled it with water, which a very severe frost turned to solid ice, the expansion of which cracked the entire mass, and in the morning we found it in pieces at the bottom of the cutting. Near the west end of the wall, but on the outer side of it, was a perfect cluster of barrows, one of which we opened and in it found a grave,

with a flat stone or big tile placed at either end. If these are the graves of great chiefs, as I believe they are supposed to be, they must have been as numerous as blackberries, for not only here, but dotted all over the Dobrudja, these barrows are to be found in endless numbers.

They were useful to us as landmarks when we wanted to describe any particular spot, and soon were given such names as 'Bustard's Barrow,' 'Eagle's Barrow,' 'the Three Barrows,' and so forth. These old Romans must have had very poor ideas of proper sanitary arrangements, for, when we came to make the long cutting on the face of the sloping cliffs, we found the soil was all formed by decayed dirt-heaps, showing that their only notion of getting rid of their filth and rubbish was to shoot it down under their noses. That it was done by the Romans was clear from the quantities of things we found in it. Day by day the foreman brought us numbers of those little earthenware lamps, copies of which may be often seen on writing-tables in England holding coils of wax tapers. Then a heap of broken pottery, all of a coarse description, would excite our interest, as it showed that the maids-of-all-work were as liable in those days, as now, to have things 'just come to pieces in their hands.'

I should not have objected to dining with these old Romans, for they evidently knew what was good, judging by the masses of oyster shells (real natives) that we came upon, to say nothing of such delicacies as whelks, cockles, and huge snail shells.

Copper money must have been a 'drug in the market,' or perhaps there was so little to buy in that same market that money was useless, and so found its way on these dirt-heaps. It turned up every day, but was not worth much; perhaps if there were anything found of value, it was picked up and kept by the workmen for themselves. Now and then curious little bronze figures would appear, and I have one now before me; it is about three inches high, and represents a very handsome, well-shaped man, as far as face and trunk go; but, if it is a copy from life, nature must have played a queer trick with the original, for one arm is a dog's neck and head, and the other a crocodile's. Rough statues cut out of limestone, all more or less broken, came to light, and a large stone, on which was an inscription, if I remember rightly, to the memory of a Mr. Tomi, for many years Roman Governor of this town. Many of these things were shipped off to England, and I believe are now in the Oxford Museum. I feel sure Mr. Tomi's stone is there, for he was supposed to be a chum of Ovid's, and to clear up some mystery about that personage. Close down by the sea we came upon a Roman bath. It consisted of two rooms, one through the other; the walls and ceiling of both were lined with very thin slabs of white marble, but these were so firmly cemented to the brick, or rather tile, walls, that they broke to pieces when we attempted to separate them.

The foundations of these rooms were oak beams about a foot square, and when we took them out they

were in such a good state of preservation that all the grain of the wood could be seen, and one would have thought it not fifty years old.

Ignorant and idle people in all parts of the world believe greatly in 'hidden treasure,' and the ignorant and idle Turk is no exception to the rule. All 'treasure trove' was claimed by the Government, and the way the great officials constantly wrote to entreat Issa Effendi to keep a sharp look-out for it, showed they expected great things. They were sadly disappointed, for they did not care for such 'trash' as Roman antiquities, and they never got a shilling's worth of hard cash. They nearly worried the life out of Issa by this. He would sit all day in the broiling sun on the edge of the cliff, under a white umbrella, and whenever he saw a man rest from his work for a moment, and two or three heads come together, away he would scuttle on his bandy-legs and arrive puffing and blowing among the men to demand what they were looking at, and he usually received some such answer as 'a blister on my hand, Effendi,' or, 'a splinter from the pick has pierced me.' The men did not like him, nor his occupation as spy, and I am sure intentionally played tricks upon him.

CHAPTER XIX.

Lodos, a south wind—The iron house—Unwelcome visitors—Tried for assault—Cast in damages—Albanian masons—Black mail—Brigands at supper.

If any of my readers have ever spent a day in the Levant during a Sirocco wind, or what the Turks call Lodos, they will not have forgotten it, but those who have not may like to hear what they have as yet mercifully escaped. Well, we will suppose a man, young, strong, full of vigour, having plenty of work to do, and eager to do it. One night towards the end of winter he retires to rest, having first mapped out a long and busy day for the morrow. The evening is a little chilly, so he pulls his blanket round him, and doing so falls off to sleep. Just before daybreak he wakes, and the first thing he becomes conscious of is that he feels in a beastly bad temper. All his bones are aching, and his skin is dry and parched. For some time he kicks and tosses in bed; at last he gets up and opens the window, and then discovers what's up. Steadily from the south-west comes the awful wind, like the breath from a huge furnace, and at the first puff it extracts and carries away on its enervating wings every atom of energy left in him. He creeps back into bed and

thinks of the plans he had formed overnight—how repulsive they appear! 'What a fool man is! What is the use of toiling and slaving?' he exclaims; 'all will go on just as well without it. I will never do anything again either in the shape of work or amusement. Hey Clianthe! you lazy, good-for-nothing, swindling Greek, do you suppose I pay you to sleep? Get up and prepare me some coffee at once.' But what a miserable blear-eyed wretch he looks, as he shuffles off to his kitchen, where he is found at eight A.M., sitting huddled up on a stool, staring at his empty grate, apparently too far gone to light the fire! Breakfast over, or rather having swallowed four large cups of tea and looked with disgust at the solids, one drifts away to the works, to find everything pretty nearly at a standstill, and, not having sufficient energy to make a row, end by sitting down on the top of a desk, and spend the morning in being insolent to one's superiors and quarrelling with the others. 'Mashallah! what a day it is! Will it ever pass, and will this cursed wind ever stop? Then what an unfortunate wretch I am, to have my lot cast with such an uninteresting quarrelsome set of fellows as you all are. I won't stand it any longer, so shall go home.' But by this time you know what Lodos means; so I will jump on twenty-four hours, when once more the starch is in our backs, quarrels are forgotten, and really there never were such a nice cheery set as we have gathered together on this little promontory.

One of the first ships from England this spring brought out a complete corrugated iron house, the

several pieces of which put together like a puzzle, and it was soon erected on the top of the old Roman ramp just outside the town. Should anyone be thinking of buying such a residence, and desire to know what kind of place he is to live in, either in a hot or a cold climate, he cannot do better than first buy a huge cauldron, light a fire beneath it, and then get inside and shut down the lid. In half an hour he will know exactly what an iron house is like in summer. To learn what it is like in winter, half bury the cauldron in snow instead of placing it on a fire, and on getting in leave the lid a little way open.

Such as it was, my brother G——, who had lately returned from England with his wife, soon took possession of it, with Georgey as Major Domo, and surrounded with what in our eyes was a splendid stock of furniture and other household gods. From this time the iron house became our favourite resort, and the pleasantest hours I ever knew in Turkey were passed in its little drawing-room. They had not been in their new home long, when one morning while we were all at the works, and the men-servants dispersed marketing, &c., Mrs. B—— sat in her drawing-room, from which large glass doors opened on to the verandah. The only other person in the house, or within call, was her German maid, who, like her mistress, could not speak Turkish. On looking up from the letters she was writing, what was her astonishment and horror to see two great hulking Turks, with their shoes in their hands, grinning in at her! In a moment she fled, and, calling her maid,

bolted herself into her bedroom. But this being on the ground floor, her persecutors were soon round at the window, where she could see their shadows through the blinds, as they peeped and leered in at the sides. After a bit they appeared to walk away, but, on looking out, there were the two cowardly brutes waiting at the corner. As often happened, I walked up with G—— to lunch, and K——, much relieved at seeing us, told all that had happened. We went out at once, but looked in vain for the two men, so returned and sat down to table. We had finished lunch, and were sitting silently smoking our cigarettes, when I espied the two Turks stealing along under the verandah. They saw they were discovered, and made a bolt of it at once across the quarter of a mile of open plain in the direction of the town. We jumped out of the window and were quickly in pursuit. They had a little the start of us; but as our legs were not, like theirs, reduced to half circles by squatting cross-legged, we soon lessened the distance between us, and by the time we reached the road we had overtaken them. We administered a few good boxes on their ears, and, finishing them off with a drubbing from their own pipe-stems, allowed them to depart to digest their lesson. As my man was retiring I shied the glass mouth-piece from his pipe-stick at his head, and thus unwittingly sowed the seeds of future trouble.

During the afternoon we received a politely-worded invitation from the Governor to call upon him, as he had heard of the affair. When work was over we

repaired to the Konak, and there found the Governor and the Council assembled, with the two Turks, who proved to be captains of some ships in the harbour.

They all fondly supposed they were going to try us for assault, and plainly showed that in their own minds they had already found us guilty.

The captains saw this as plainly as we did, and so, having the support of so many sympathisers, the pluck they had sadly lacked a few hours before, when it might so materially have helped them, now rose to the surface.

First they grumbled, then they swaggered, and at last one of them swore by Allah the first time he set eyes on us outside this room he would limb us. G—— quietly assured him he need not postpone so agreeable a pastime for a moment, and by way of encouraging him jumped up as if intending to knock him down. Was there ever anything so awful! A Giaour, not only giving a gallant child of the Prophet a thrashing in the open, but when brought before the Governor (one appointed by the Padishah or King of Kings to administer the law as laid down by the great Mahomed), actually about to repeat his offence, and then laughed as if it were great fun! The case was far too serious to be settled in such a place as Kustendjie, but must be sent to Constantinople, and surely the highest official in the land would take the matter up. Inshallah (please God) it would not lead to a European war, but there was no knowing.

Leaving this pretty little storm in a tea-kettle to quiet itself, we walked home, and it was some months

before we heard of it again, when a letter in Turkish, which must have taken a month to write, was brought us by the Governor, who informed us that it was the will of some great man in Stamboul that we should pay 30*l.*, not for the assault, but for the mouth-piece of the pipe which I had flung after the Turk, and which he declared was a piece of splendid amber! 'You may lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink;' and so it proved with us. It might be the will of some great man that we should pay up, but we did not see it; and the whole affair ended, if it could be called ending, by our receiving just such another letter once every three months during all the time we were at Kustendjie, and I should not be in the least surprised, if I went back there now, to find the letters begin again!

The masons we chiefly employed on the line were Christians from Albania, who each spring swarm all over European Turkey, and return to their homes for the winter months. I cannot say they are highly skilled workmen, but they are willing to learn, will do as they are told, and stick well to their work. They come all the long journey on foot in gangs of about twenty under the leadership of a gang-master, who caters for them, and for whom they work under certain verbal conditions. With each company there are three or four ponies to carry their great-coats, and a few pots and pans, and occasionally a man, should one fall ill by the way. It took them twenty-one days to walk from their own hills to Kustendjie, and not bad work

either, if the nature of the roads is taken into account. If they find plenty of work, as with us, the different gangs join together under one chosen master, who will either contract for a job, or will superintend his men.

Year after year the same set of men came back to us, and latterly all our building was let to them by contract, we fixing the price, and they always accepting what we told them would enable them to make a fair profit, for, as they confessed, they were quite incapable of calculating it out for themselves. Most of them are rough carpenters as well as masons, and the gang can always do all the work about a new house. During all the years they worked for us we never had a dispute with them, or any sort of disturbance or trouble. They have been for so many years under the iron hand of the Turk that they always submit to him, and are the most patient, cheerful set of fellows in Europe. Very different are they to their neighbours the Herzegovinians and Montenegrins; but these have latterly made themselves pretty well known throughout Europe.

For some time we had had a weekly postal service from Varna which was worked by an Armenian named 'Hadjie.' One day during this summer he was pounced upon whilst ascending the hill above Varna, carried off to a quiet spot in the bush, and told that in future, if he wished to journey in safety, he would have to pay black mail, by bringing to a certain place, each time he passed, a little tobacco and gunpowder. If this were done all would be well, but if he failed in his

part of the contract, or if he told anyone of his having seen the brigands, he would be robbed and his throat cut. It was not much they asked, so, for the sake of quietness, Hadjie received from us a few shillings weekly, which he expended for the knights of the road. There was no doubt about this band being there, for not only did we hear of their constantly robbing people, but Buyuk Tchellaby very nearly fell into their clutches. He was on his way alone from Varna to Kustendjie, and having started late was soon overtaken by night, accompanied by fog. It was not long before he lost the track, and, after wandering about some time, he stopped to collect his thoughts and light a pipe. While doing so he heard voices at some little distance, so, tying Cole-ei to a tree, he approached cautiously on foot, and on coming to the edge of a small ravine, there, sitting round the fire at the bottom, were the veritable article! Twelve villanous-looking ruffians, armed to the teeth, all busily engaged on a lamb they had just taken off the fire. He was so near he could distinguish all their features and hear what they were saying; but, dreading that the amorous Cole-ei should scent their horses from afar and pour forth a cry of love, he hastened back to him, mounted, and soon put a considerable tract of forest between himself and the sociable supper-party.

CHAPTER XX.

Native servants—Smashed crockery—Great heat—A woman killed by musquitos—Musquito nets—Early rising—Locusts.

EARLY this next summer I was draughted on to Tchernavoda to look after that end of the line, and took up my abode there, first in Vlatt's house, and afterwards in one of a row of cottages we had built on the top of the hill above the village. The British housekeeper will be interested in hearing that she is not the only person that has been plagued with servants, and that bad ones are not confined to 'the tight little Island.' All our old staff of domestics were bagged by my brothers, and I had to look out for a fresh supply. On Clianthe's recommendation, I first took his younger brother, a most unprepossessing young lout, who rejoiced in the euphonious name of 'Leonidas.' Had I had no other work to do all day, and had devoted myself to his education for years, I am sure I could not have taught him the very A. B. C. of service. He had only two ideas in his dirty head. The first, to gape open-mouthed with a love-sick leer after the Miss Vlatts; and the other, to sleep. After I was living in my house on the top of the hill, I constantly came home at night with the fond hope of finding dinner ready, and

then would hear from the grooms that Leonidas had been away in the village all day. Down I would ride, and there sure enough stood the young lady-killer with his mouth wide open staring at his charmers. A few flicks of the hunting-whip would send him off to prepare some mess for me, and when I returned home, after a chat with old Vlatt, I invariably found him asleep on the kitchen table, and the fire not even lighted! As he never did a single thing for me, I sent him about his business, and did not pay him, and since then he has had a *third* idea, which is that I owe him some large sums of money. His place was taken by another brother, Demetry, familiarly called 'Memico,' which he explained by saying, 'My name be Demetry, but friends chop him small and call me "Memico." Memico all same as one "Jim."' He was not a bad servant in some respects, but was the greatest robber that ever cheated a master. I used to keep him for a few months till I could not stand his prigging any longer, give him a thrashing, and send him away. Then would follow a lot of others of much the same stamp as Leonidas, till in despair I would reinstate Demetry and shut my eyes all I could to his thieving. Eventually I settled down with Mustapha, a perfectly honest middle-aged Turk, whose only recommendation as a cook was that for many years he had been a tallow-dip manufacturer. He was rather sulky-looking, and never wasted a word on anyone, but he quickly turned out a good servant and lived with me for years. When I left Turkey I got

him a place on the line, and I have since heard he is to be seen dressed in a swell guard's uniform and acting in that capacity.

The first day he entered my service, he had not been in the kitchen half an hour when I heard a fearful smash, and, on going to see what was the matter, I was informed that the tray had slipped out of his hand, and every single piece of crockery was broken. Years afterwards Mustapha himself told me the real secret of this mishap. He feared I might have used the plates, &c., to eat swine's flesh on, so would not risk having anything to do with things so polluted.

The heat this summer was greater than I have ever known it, and both Europeans and natives suffered greatly from it. During all the month of August the Fahrenheit thermometer in my room remained day and night so close to 96° that I thought it must have got out of order, and it was only by inquiring into the conduct of others that I was convinced it was correct. I have seen an English navvy obliged to take his handkerchief to pick up an iron bar that had been lying in the sun, and others had all the skin peeled off their faces by the heat. There was one day in particular which I shall never forget. An English gunboat was in the harbour, and we had the pleasure of entertaining the officers. After suffering heat that gave one a catching choking sensation in the throat, we rejoiced to see densely black clouds topping the horizon in the north-west, and then rapidly extending over all the sky. Here comes the rain at last, and there

will be an end of this dreadful heat! On and on came the clouds and at last broke over us, accompanied by a hurricane that threatened to sweep away the iron house in which we were sitting, but there was not one drop of rain! No, in the place of rain was a fine black dust that filled the air and made the room quite dark. It penetrated everywhere, and in a few moments everything was covered with it, and the heat, if anything, worse than before. It lasted half an hour, and after that we could see it passing away miles out to sea. It had brought from the marshes of the Danube a nice sprinkling of musquitos, all anxious for dinner after their hurried journey. This I served some hundreds with, for, sitting on the verandah talking during the evening, I carefully flapped them from my face, but forgot I was sitting in thin duck trowsers on a cane-bottomed chair, and it was only after I had been well bitten through the small holes, that it struck me what it was that gave me such pain!

I was told by the captain of a Turkish ship (though I can't guarantee the truth of the story) that one night, when anchored on the Danube opposite a Moldavian village, he heard piercing screams in a woman's voice, which gradually grew fainter and fainter, till they died away in about three hours. During the darkness he was not allowed to land on that shore, but next morning he inquired about it, and was told, 'Oh, it was a mere nothing! We were keeping a feast day, and a man who was drunk thought if he stripped his wife naked and tied her to a tree close by, all the

musquitos would go to her and not annoy him so much. He did so, but it was of no good; he was bitten as badly as ever.' 'But how about the woman?' 'Oh, the musquitos killed her!' Long live Bacchus and the noble Moldave! I suffered fearfully from the bites of these little demons, and, occupied as I was all day on the banks of the Danube, my life was a burden to me. At night it was not so bad, for I had constructed a sort of hutch in the verandah, the sides of which were of wire gauze, and in this I spent my nights from the time I arrived home till I left next morning. What few musquitos came in when the door was open were soon got rid of by a piece of lighted paper, and I lay on my chair-bed and laughed at their impotent attempts to get at me. I did not leave it even for dinner, for I had that handed in, a plate at a time, through a small trap-door at the side. Besides this I had a bed with a good musquito curtain to offer a friend should one drop in, as was often the case. And here let me say that a musquito curtain should be large and square, and made of net the mesh of which cannot be *too coarse*, for owing to the length of its legs and wings a musquito requires quite a big hole to get through. He has to go at it with a rush, and, as he is unable to creep a step, all his locomotion is done with wings extended. If the curtain is made of muslin, or the mesh of the net too small, one feels stifled in a hot country and one's rest is destroyed. Should you be obliged to pass the night among musquitos without the protection of a curtain, rub yourself all over with oil.

Mustard oil is best if you can get it. 'How disgusting!' you will say. Yes, it is; but, take my word for it, you would gladly use even *castor* oil in this way before half the night is over, if it is very hot and the musquitos lively.

Do let me give another piece of advice. In whatever country you may be, never be persuaded to get up early in the morning. Half-past seven or eight o'clock is quite early enough, and every hour you are out of bed before that takes 20 per cent. off your usefulness during the day. I know this will be thought a strange doctrine by many, and they will launch out into praises of the beautiful cool morning. I allow it is the coolest part of the twenty-four hours, but, as good sleep is absolutely necessary for man, take these best hours to secure it in. If you go to bed at nine or ten P.M. with the intention of getting up at four or five A.M., your blood is in a fever and you are restless and lie awake, or if you do go asleep you toss about and work as hard as you have all day, until about one o'clock—then you drop off into the real life-giving sleep, and it is murder to mind and body to destroy it in three or four hours! It is, I am convinced, far better to sit about in the coolest place you can find till about eleven or twelve P.M. and then go quietly to bed, and the chances are you will be asleep in half an hour, and turn out at eight o'clock next morning as fresh and strong as a lion. 'But I am fresh and feel as strong as a dozen lions at four A.M.' I won't contradict you, but how about your feelings at noon? I have seen many an early bird looking as if he would like to go to perch about that time, and most

of them do just flutter up about two P.M. for an hour or so. Besides, is not early rising a sign of savage life? Is it not true that the greatest savages of all go to sleep at dark and rise before daylight? You may track civilisation through the life of a country and mark its progress, step by step, by the hour of rising!

Mind, I am writing of working life in distant lands, and it is for this reason I do not finish half this volume in a treatise on that greatest of all nuisances to himself and others—the man who, in England, gets up before the housemaid!

During this hot summer, the behaviour of the English ladies at Kustendjie, while out for a stroll in the cool of the evening, became most extraordinary in the eyes of us poor bachelors; so much so, that we used to sit each evening in our verandah, and watch them with intense interest. A door would open in one of the houses on the far side of the compound, and forth would come a sedate and dignified dame, accompanied by her husband, and, after perhaps standing for a few moments to admire the beauties of the bay, would cross the road, and quietly promenade up and down the compound. No matter how calm and collected she generally appeared, we soon learned to feel sure she would end her walk, sooner or later, by a succession of wild jumps and heartrending screams, and finally by rushing madly into the first house where a woman could be found!

Our innocent single minds were greatly perturbed by this extraordinary behaviour, and it was some time

before we discovered what had caused the outbreak of this jumping epidemic. It was only by gently insinuating that we believed the ladies were certainly mad, that a husband at last was induced to explain it to us. 'You see, ladies are just now wearing those absurd hoops and crinolines, and as they walk over the grass they are sure to cover some sleeping locust, which, being disturbed by the approaching feet, make a sudden spring up, and then—and then—well, they can't abide the buzzing of the paper-like wings.' 'My dear fellow, I congratulate you; a locust in a petticoat is a trifle; I feared it was a bee in the bonnet.'

If the mischief and annoyance these stupid, long-winged, big-eyed, but apparently short-sighted insects occasioned had stopped here, they would have been rather amusing; but, as it was, they were a fearful scourge to everyone. They first made their appearance one or two at a time, and were sought for and looked at as curiosities; then more arrived, quickly to be followed by countless millions. They were always going straight for the south; but as they could only fly about ten yards at a time, and had to take a long rest between each flight, their progress was slow and it was some weeks before we saw the last of them. Fortunately they did not make their appearance until after harvest, or they would have utterly destroyed the crop; as it was, they nipped off every green leaf in the country, and apparently for no other purpose than the fun of the thing. I many times watched them most carefully. After settling on a plant, they would crawl slowly to the nearest leaf,

take the stem in their strong nippers-like mouth, and with one pinch bite it off and let it fall—then on to the next and next, till every leaf was on the ground. I am only speaking of what I have myself observed; I dare say others have been more fortunate than I was, and have been able to see these pests at their dinner.

Besides destroying everything they could get into their mouths, the locusts succeeded in making themselves objectionable in a thousand other ways. On putting one's hand into one's pocket, or slipping on a boot, or getting into bed, buzz would go one or more of these blundering insects, and it required nerves of iron not to be startled. Then they got into the tea-kettle, and, after being boiled there, would succeed in getting up the spout, and, putting their heads out at the end, would seem to laugh at one's vain attempts at getting it to pour. They tumbled down the wells in such quantities that the water was poisoned by the dead bodies, and locusts' wings, locusts' legs, and locusts' bodies appeared in every dish that came to table.

If you took a walk up wind, buzz, up would start a locust, and, before you could bob your head, bang it came in your face with a most surprising force, and it was fortunate if you were not half blinded. Fortunately there is no insect so little capable of taking care of itself as a locust, and they died by thousands through their own stupidity; and I believe that everyone that lived to reach the sea-shore perished in the waters. For some weeks there was a bank of dead bodies on the beach just at the edge of the waves, and the whole air

was tainted from the corruption when the wind came from the sea. It is said that there is no living animal in the world that does not eat these creatures, and that man in some parts of Africa looks on them as great delicacies. I can believe in man eating them, but I am somewhat sceptical as to graminivorous creatures doing so, and also I would not recommend them as food to condition hunters on.

CHAPTER XXI.

Fraudulent bakers—British sub-contractors—Yorkey George—Messrs. Lever and Switch—Removed from the workhouse—The Bulgar and other races.

As most of our men came from distant villages, and were quite unable to procure provisions for themselves, we provided each man with two loaves of good brown bread a day. To be able to do this we had to make contracts with Armenian or Greek bakers for a daily supply, which they delivered to the different foremen, who distributed it each morning to their men. Owing to the universal rascality of the bakers, these contracts were an endless trouble to us, and complaints were constantly made by the unfortunate labourers, who had to subsist on their sour black bread. I had been greatly troubled by my baker at Tchernavoda, and over and over again had threatened the cringing rogue, who had each time assured me he would do better in future. One morning on going down to the works, about five hundred men collected round our little office, each with his loaf in his hand, and respectfully requested me to inspect them. It was black, sour, full of blue mould, and, indeed, quite unfit for human food. I at once despatched some men to the bakehouse, to bring the con-

tractor to me, and sent others into the scrub to cut a bundle of sticks, which were placed on the table beside the time-book. All the men stood round in a circle, and, when the baker arrived, I showed him the bread and asked what he thought of it. He pretended to examine it, and then said, 'it was not quite as good perhaps as it might be, but he thought good enough for workmen.' I then told him I had determined he should stand there and eat a whole loaf himself, or take a cut on the back from each man as I read his name from the pay-book. At this there was a shout of approval from all but the baker, who began begging and entreating to be excused; but I hardened my heart, and called out the first name, which being immediately responded to by a stick, the baker took a huge bite at the bread and at one gulp swallowed the mouthful. He struggled on, but it required one or two helpings to stick sauce before the entire loaf was finished. I then told him that whenever the men complained of the bread, he would again have an invitation to breakfast, and despatched him to digest at his leisure the nauseous stuff he had eaten. In a few days the account of my morning's doings spread throughout the line, and from that time forth we had no more trouble with the bread contractors.

It was not long now before the 'British sub-contractor' made his appearance on the line. They had all begun life as navvies, and like the navvies had drifted from work to work all over Europe; and though most of them were quite uneducated, and it was rare to find one

who could read or write, they were eminently ''cute,' and had had such experience of railway works and were so practical, that they could estimate the cost of an undertaking involving some thousands of pounds, without putting a pen to paper. Several of these men procured contracts under us, but the leading man among them was 'Yorkey George.' (He had another name, but it was not for every-day use, and only appeared when a contract had to be signed.) He had the laying down of the rails throughout the line; and it was a pleasure to see the admirable manner in which he organised his work, which proceeded so rapidly that it seemed he had only to cast his eye along the ground to leave the rails in their places. He had built a van on four strong wheels, which moved on day by day as the work progressed, and into this he had stowed away the most extraordinary collection of eatables and drinkables, but especially the latter, and he used to boast that there was not a wine grown in Europe that he could not produce from some hole or corner. He paid his men well; but none but the exceptionally good stayed long under Yorkey George, for he looked to make his money by rapid labour rather than by screwing his men. No one ever saw Yorkey George in the least the worse for drink, but the quantities of alcohol he managed to pour down his throat was a caution. On one occasion I saw him finish a bottle of brandy between the hours of four and ten A.M., and I often have seen him drink half a tumbler of raw spirits into which he had put a pinch of cayenne pepper 'because now-a-days it

was such poor weak stuff it struck cold to the stomach without it.'

When we were all down with ague Yorkey kept quite well, which he attributed to never having allowed any of that rank poison *water* to get down his throat; 'but then it ain't the lessest mite of use my preachin' to you. You'll stick to that wicious animal practice till your bolt is shot, and you are become worms' wittles. Oh, it's a mel-an-chol-ly end to look forrad to, and I'll save you if I can; now do just take a drop to please me!' He was a splendid missionary, and never lost a chance of spreading his doctrines either by advice or example. I have not seen him for some years; but the last time I did so he was, as usual, drinking raw brandy and looking the picture of health, and he told me he did not know what it was to be ill. I once asked him if he had ever been to church. 'Yes, once, and I shan't forget it in a hurry, for dang me if the parson didn't go and tie me up to the greatest she-devil in Europe, and what's more, charged me a lot of good money for doing so.'

'Well, but you have somehow slipped out of your bonds?'

'Yes, this here old friend (putting his hand on a bottle of brandy) helped me out of the mess, for you see, one night in Spain when we were a re-joicing in a quiet way at the finish of the Bill-Boa and Tu-Delly Railway, she took a nip too much, and became silly-like and pulled a Spaniard's nose, and he sheathed about five inches of cold steel between her ribs; and so, she

just left the rails. You won't catch me putting myself in such a pardicament agin; not what but there are some werry good women and useful too, but you see I am so soft-hearted I can't abide kicking the critturs about, and if you don't they are sure to get up too much steam, and then either bust or bolt, and a chap gets laughed at by his pals. Now a dawg, sir, that is quite different. Lord save ye, that little beast Bendigo is worth all the women in the world and is twice as reasonable. The only thing foolish he ever does is to lap water; but then you see a crittur is a crittur, and requires eddicating, and I am that fond of him I allers puts a little liquor in his water, and he begins quite to look for it like a Christian. It's a sad thing about poor Long Tom—no! you haven't heard? well, you see last night he was in liquor and just tumbled off the pier, and his body hasn't floated yet, which in course it will when it swells. Ah, drat the water, what a lot of poor fellows it kills!'

Messrs. Lever and Switch were also contractors on the line, and were both characters in their way, but so utterly different that it was a wonder how they ever came to be pals. Lever was a tall, active, rollicking fellow, always laughing or joking, working or drinking, with a contempt for money and a love for good living. Switch, on the other hand, was a short, set, morose, silent man, fond of drink as all navvies are, but so parsimonious that he could not make up his mind to treat himself, much less a friend. All the time the contract was running, these two lived together in a hut, but never

once sat down to meals together, because Switch did not possess a pocket-knife, and Lever would not lend him his till after every tit-bit had been fished out of the dish.

When their work was finished they left for London, taking their profits home with them in a bill on the office, made out in their joint names. Switch, however, presented the bill alone, and when told he must bring his partner with him, said, 'Oh, that was all right; it did not matter, as he was authorised to draw the money for the two.' Day after day he presented himself, and did his utmost to get the bill cashed; but, when he found this was not possible, he confessed that Lever had died the very night he arrived in London. Proper inquiries were set on foot and this statement confirmed, and then an advertisement, repeated a few times in the papers, found Lever's father and mother in some workhouse. With their consent the money their son had made was expended on a joint annuity which brought them in 50*l.* a year, and, settled in a snug cottage in a country village, they lived for years as quite wealthy people.

One of the most curious things connected with the construction of this railway was the number of different races that, for one reason or another, were collected on the works. At one time we counted among this heterogeneous mass thirty-two different languages and dialects, but yet, with a few exceptions, Turkish was used by them all for every-day purposes. Amongst the natives proper, far the best and most intelligent workmen were

the Bulgars, and with proper education and good example they were capable of doing anything. Unfortunately at present the only education for the Bulgar is found in the offices and shops of the Levantine merchants in Constantinople and other large towns, where commercial morality is so corrupt that they have no option but to turn out rogues. An honest man there is looked upon as a fool; and when a man is spoken of as being a genius, it means that he is a bigger and more plausible liar than his neighbour, and a more thorough and successful cheat. The peasant boy is first taken into these offices in a menial capacity, and often by his sharpness raises himself to be a partner, or to start in business for himself, but in any case he will be a rogue.

There are no schools, except those attached to the Greek Church, where, I believe, such folly as teaching honesty is unthought of. For this reason the bettermost people are to be avoided as much as possible, but there will be found a great deal of sterling good among the village peasants that only requires development. They are a steady, quiet, hard-working set of people, patient and unresisting under the Turkish yoke, but at the same time not cringing or servile like their brother-Christians the Greeks and Armenians, and I have no doubt that were the Turk banished out of Bulgaria, the Bulgars would soon convert it into one of the finest and most prosperous countries in Eastern Europe. As much as possible we employed these men on the line, and in after years some of them became fitters, cleaners,

locomotive drivers, and in fact filled all the places of skilled workmen, and it is wonderful to think how they excelled, when one bears in mind how few had been their advantages.

We had large gangs of Turks; but they are never really good workmen, owing to their utter inability to stick long to one thing. As the poaching loafer of a country village often becomes quite a hero in such an emergency as a fire or an inundation, so is the Turk good at a pinch, but for steady continuous work give me the Bulgar. Rare indeed was it to find a Greek or Armenian on the line with a pick in his hand, and never if the foreman were worth his salt. The Greek may just earn his bread as servant or office-boy, or by keeping a drinking shop, but never by hard, steady labour. No, hold; I must make an exception in favour of the Greek boatman, who is really a fine fellow, and deserves all praise for his industry, pluck, and intelligence. I believe, too, there are some good masons and carpenters among them, though I personally had little to do with them. The Armenian had better always work for *himself*. You might just as reasonably shut up a ferret in a box with young rabbits, and expect it not to kill them, as to expect an Armenian of any class, from the highest to the lowest, not to swindle, and he is such a proficient in the art that you must be several shades sharper than Old Nick himself to avoid his clutches. There is a saying in Turkey that 'it takes two Turks to swindle a Greek, two Greeks to swindle a Jew, two Jews to swindle an Armenian,' and it is quite true.

There are lots of gipsies in Turkey, both Mussulman and Christian, but they are so like their English brethren, and are occupied in so exactly the same manner, that I need say little about them; besides, they did little towards the construction of the line, though much towards the destruction of it, by prigging all they could carry away with them.

We always employed large gangs of Tartars and found them excellent workmen, but as I shall have occasion to write about them further on, I will not do so here. Among the other numerous races, there were few that were good for anything, and certainly not the grinning rogue that came cringing and salaaming up to us, and said, 'I, Sahib, am an Englishman, from your country on the banks of the Ganges!'

CHAPTER XXII.

Murder and execution—A trip to the Balkan—The busy B——
—Wanton destruction of the forests.

THERE was a good deal of excitement this summer about a murder that had been perpetrated at the little town of Mangarlia, about twenty miles west of Kustendjie. The house of a Turk on the outskirts of the town was broken open in the night, and the throats cut of the proprietor, his two wives, and four small children. It was done for the sake of the few shillings the man might possess, but as he was poor they could not have expected much. The murderers were seen leaving the house red-handed, and were identified as an old gipsy, his two sons, and three of his tribe. Wonderful to relate, they were all captured next morning by the Zaptiehs, and brought into Kustendjie, where they were heavily chained and put in prison. Some months afterwards they were tried by the Governor and Council. As they were poor men, and their friends had not paid a few dozen witnesses to prove an *alibi*, and as the evidence was sufficiently strong to convince even the minds of the Turkish judges, they were very properly convicted and sentenced to death. In Turkey the

nearest relation of the murdered man is often offered the choice of blood money or the lives of the murderers; and so it was in this case, but, as the murderers had no money, the choice was soon made. Then another peculiar point in Turkish law is that if there is not a paid Government executioner within reasonable distance, the friends of the dead man have to provide one. The killing trade had been so slack at Kustendjie, that it had not been worth the while of a public executioner to live on the spot, and now there was no one to do the work, and as the case in hand was a heavy one, it was several months before anyone could be found to do it at a reasonable price. Late one evening, during the following winter, the brother of the murdered man called on the Governor to say that at last an enterprising individual had been found, who for the sake of a few piastres paid in advance, and a few more he hoped to collect from an admiring crowd, would be willing to officiate in the early morning, provided he might do it in his own way, which was to chop their heads off with his long knife. The Pasha gave permission at once, for were not the dogs eating the bread of the town in idleness, and this would stop their mouths. Care was taken that the doomed should have no idea of their approaching fate, but, on the contrary, a hint was thrown out that they might soon expect a change for the better, and they only discovered that their evil and misspent career on earth was about to be finished, when they were led, with heavy chains on their hands, into the little market-place next morning,

and saw the unmistakable preparations that had been made. Drawn up at the entrance of the only two streets that led into it was a line of Zaptiehs, with drawn cutlasses and loaded carbines, and clustering round the sides and at the windows were the entire population, whilst in front of the door of the chief café squatted on a raised divan, the Pasha and Council with their friends were drinking coffee and smoking their long pipes. In the centre of the market-place stood a young Turk, his sleeves rolled back to his shoulder, and a naked knife about eighteen inches long in his hand, and it was at once evident that he had been taking something stronger than coffee to steady his nerve, which had had exactly the opposite result on his legs. The six miserable, ragged, shivering wretches were halted in front of him, and one of them led forward by a jailer, stripped to his waist, and then ordered to kneel down on his hands and knees, which he did at once without a murmur, being, I imagine, too much paralysed by fear to know exactly what he was doing. A flash, a dull thud—all was over, and the executioner, having hacked off the head, bowled it away towards a corner. Then the next on the list, but as he did not keep still, but writhed backwards and forwards, the knife descended on his shoulder instead of his neck, leaving a fearful gash on the tawny skin. The tortured man started to his feet, and, before anyone could stop him, rushed up the market-place, till he was confronted by the street guard, and once more led back to the fatal spot. And this time his sufferings were terminated.

The disgusting butchery was then repeated till there were six lifeless, headless trunks stretched in a pool of blood in the snow.

The executioner's work was over, so now for the reward. With his gory hands stretched out, he walked about in the crowd and in a loud voice solicited bakshish. Two hours later the bodies were hard-frozen, and were then arranged in a corner of the market-place, standing up, with the heads reversed and balanced on the necks. A few hurdles were placed in front to keep off the dogs, and then they were left till darkness hid them, when they were carted away and buried. I need not say I did not witness this scene myself, but the description was given me by several of the English workmen who did.

A contract had been made with a Greek merchant at Varna, one Christo Econnoma, for the supply of oak sleepers, and during the past winter these had been felled in the Balkan and were now collected near the sea. An advance of money being asked for on the sleepers, it fell to my lot to ride down to see they were actually cut and all ready for shipment. Once more I traversed the weary road to Varna, accompanied by Mehmet, and took up my abode at the house of a Greek builder named Costi. A room was assigned me, and I was delighted with its clean appearance. The floor was covered with a beautifully fine reed-matting, and the divan, on which I was to sleep, with snow-white linen covers. The ceiling was composed of deal planks prettily put together in different patterns. The window opened over the bay, and though the day was

broiling hot, a delicious breeze came in. Here was luxury for a prince. Surely my lines had fallen in pleasant waters. Alas! alas! before morning I was painfully reminded of the fact that 'all is not gold that glitters.' Soon after a good supper I blew out my candle, stretched myself on the divan, and made up my mind to take twelve hours' snooze to clear off scores with my day's fatigue, and take in a stock of vigour that would put me well on my journey on the morrow. In a minute I was asleep, but wide awake again the next. 'Ah,' I said to myself, 'there are fleas—no, musquitoes; and yet the latter would hardly bite me all round the neck and on the edges of the hand I placed under my cheek, besides there is a peculiarly painful burn about those bites. Yes, I have it, bugs.' In a moment I was up and the candle lighted, and then suddenly twitching away the white pillow I saw my surmises were correct. Yes, bugs! bugs by the thousand—bugs in regiments—bugs in whole armies, and a fine active lot they were, for they scuttled off before I could secure one of them. Perhaps they would not come again if I kept the candle burning close by. Again I fell asleep for I was really tired, but it was of no use. I was nearly devoured by the little vermin, and at last got up, relinquishing all thoughts of sleep. But now a bright thought struck me. I would lie down in the middle of the floor and with a bunch of damped matches draw a line round me with the phosphorescent ends. They hate this smell, so perhaps would not pass my fortification.

This was soon done, and I laid down, and quietly watched the result. Soon out came the skirmishers, quickly followed by the advanced guard and the main army. 'Ah, ha! my friends,' I exultingly exclaimed, 'you don't like it! it is no good your moving off right and left, for I am in a circular camp and the drawbridge up. Oh! you are retiring at last—well, good-night, but what is this? something is pattering down on me from that pretty ceiling, and, yes, here are the enemy on me by thousands, and I am conquered.'

I never closed my eyes again that night, and as soon as it was daylight I strolled out, and wandered about the town feeling very miserable, till it should be a reasonable hour to call upon the Consul, Mr. Suter, which I had been unable to do on the previous evening. I found him most kind; he asked me to share his breakfast, and told me he should be quite hurt if on my return from the Balkan I did not put up at the Consulate, which was not only clean, but free from bugs!

On leaving him I found Mehmet in the street with my horse, and as it had been settled that we should leave the town one by one at separate gates, I mounted and rode to our rendezvous, which was two miles on our road. We had taken this precaution, because the road we were going on had the unpleasant reputation of being a favourite haunt of all the brigands, and we feared if we started as if for a journey, some friend in the town might send word to a gang to be on the look-out for us.

Our party consisted of Christo, the contractor, myself,

Mehmet, a government Zaptieh, and two servants. As soon as we were all collected, we started on our journey over the small hills that continually rise higher and higher, one above the other, till they end in the Balkan range above Bourgas.

For the first four hours our path was bounded on either side by dense scrub, covered over and matted together with creepers, and in consequence of the height and thickness of these, no distant view could be obtained. Every stick of big timber had long ago disappeared, and these rich valleys and sunny hill-sides were utterly unproductive, except for the bundles of sticks that the Varna donkey boys cut and carried into the town for winter fuel.

We then arrived at a wide valley, down the centre of which winds the small mountain river, Kamchik (whip), into which flows the drainage of the eastern slopes of the Balkan, from the neighbourhood of Shumla to the Black Sea. It is not much of a river, but in proper hands the valley with its rich alluvial soil should be a perfect garden. Now it is a useless, impenetrable jungle, only inhabited by wild pigs, which I was told swarm in it, and are protected from the attacks of men by the thickness of the cover. From this valley our road began to ascend, till at about 2,000 feet elevation we came upon quite a different soil and vegetation. The everlasting limestone had disappeared, and red sand, such as I had not seen since I left England, took its place. The scrubby bush and creepers were left behind, and in their place were the remains of fine oaks, and

the ground covered with bracken. I say advisedly the 'remains of fine oaks,' for wherever man has been able to lead a bullock cart on these hills, the timber, good for anything, has been wantonly destroyed, and as no one ever thinks of the future, there are no young trees coming on to take the place of the patriarchs of the forest. Lying scattered about in all directions are the remains of splendid oaks in every stage of decay, that have been cut or burnt down for the sake of some peculiarily twisted limb that a villager has coveted, thinking it the proper shape for a yoke, or for some other fanciful purpose. And thus, not only here, but all over Bulgaria, these primeval forests, that under fair treatment might have been a source of considerable revenue to the Turk in his hour of need, will hardly furnish sufficient logs to make sleepers for forty miles of railroad. As with the oak, so is it with all the other trees; and now all the timber used for building in Turkey is imported, chiefly from the pine forests of the Carpathians, whence it is floated down the small rivers to Galatz, there it is made up into huge rafts and towed by tugs down the Black Sea to Constantinople. Every now and then the Government, urged on by the bankers at Constantinople, with the idea of creating security for fresh loans, makes a feeble movement for the protection of the forests. A few French or Polish foresters are appointed, and receive their salaries six months after they are due, but as they have no subordinates and no assistance from the provincial governors or police, they

are worse than useless, and the reign of destruction flourishes as it has from the beginning.

I once knew one of these Polish gentlemen who received his appointment at Constantinople, with orders to proceed to a town on the Danube where 'instructions would be immediately sent to him.' Knowing his new masters well, he insisted on having an order on a local governor to pay his salary out of the provincial taxes, and then he quietly settled down in the town to which he had been sent. Two years afterwards he told me he had not received his instructions, he had not been near the forest, and the only work he had done was signing receipts for his salary. I asked why he did not write and stir up the Government, to which he replied 'What for? to get discharged? No; the place suits me, and bear in mind, Mr. B——, when you are in the service of the Porte, the only crime they will not excuse is "trop de zèle."'

Well, as the tree falls so must it lie. It is no business of mine, and I should not mention it, only I think it may be of interest to some of my readers who hold Turkish securities and put faith in John Turk. Thank God, I am not in this unenviable position!

The mines of Turkey are much in the same position as the forests, and are destroyed as much as possible; though, thanks to bullock carts not being able to burrow far underground, there yet remain in them large stores of wealth. But these I believe all belong to the Sultan's mamma, or grandmamma, and she steadily refuses to allow the Giaour to go grubbing at her riches, and as she

can't grub herself, she and the country might as well be without them. All the coal used by the numerous steamers in the Bosphorus come from Newcastle or Wales, and the rich mines close at hand remain untouched, or only scratched at on the surface. Doubtless there is a great future before Turkey, and 'there is no field like it for European enterprise and capital,' but not till the Turk himself has retired to the other side of the Bosphorus and relapsed into barbarism, a state from which he has never really emerged, nor ever will!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A long sleep—Trip up the Black Sea—A forced landing on the Danube—Too much praying—Crushed under a stone—Recklessness to danger.

To return to our journey. During the whole day, in which we traversed fifty miles of road, we only passed one village, and hardly saw a human creature. But I was told we purposely avoided passing through more villages than we could help, as it is as well on these hills not to attract attention; and on our return journey we took a totally different route, so that if there should be a gang of robbers on the watch for us, they would be disappointed.

At night we arrived at a Bulgar village, and took up our quarters in the house of the woodman, who had superintended the sleeper-felling. Here we all passed a wretched night, owing to the attacks of myriads of fleas and musquitoes, and I never closed my eyes though I felt nearly worn out by fatigue and want of sleep. We started at daybreak to inspect the piles of sleepers on the sea-shore, and I was soon convinced we might safely give the required advance on them. Then, having returned to the village and eaten a few mouthfuls of breakfast, we proceeded on our way, and, keeping near

the sea all the day, we arrived at Varna just before the gates closed. I at once availed myself of Mr. Suter's kind invitation, and went to his comfortable house. I had now been on horseback three days, had ridden two hundred miles, and had not slept half-an-hour since starting, and I must own I now felt more dead than alive. I could not eat, but by 8 P.M. was asleep in bed, and did not wake for twelve hours, and then I only roused up for some breakfast, and fell asleep again till just before dinner at sunset. I spent a very pleasant evening with Mr. Suter, and then secured another good night's rest, and thus paid Dame Nature all back debts!

The next day, just as I was preparing for my return ride to Kustendjie, 'The Lucifer,' an Austrian Lloyd's boat, came into the harbour, and I was told she would start at once for the Danube, calling at Kustendjie on her way. I therefore changed my plans, and having sent off Mehmet and the horses, transferred myself and luggage (which consisted of a comb and tooth brush) to the steamer.

I soon made friends with the only other cabin passenger, a Turkish Pasha, bound for some town on the Danube, and we sat and chatted and smoked together. As is usually the case, there were a lot of deck passengers, cooped up in small open pens next the netting, much in the way one sees sheep in a lamb yard on a farm in England, only not nearly so well protected from the weather. The captain told the Pasha and me, that one morning during the previous winter, after a rough passage when the frost was intense, a Turk and three

women were found frozen to death in one of these pens, yet they could well have afforded to pay for a cabin passage, and if they had at any time during the night complained of the cold, Captain Brün would have taken them down below. The Pasha said 'Ah! zara yok' (no matter), 'it was kismet,' but the captain and I said it was brutal stupidity. No one would get frozen this trip, for truly it was a piping hot day, with a heaviness in the atmosphere that boded no good.

From Varna to Kustendjie is an eight hours' passage by steamboat, but when we had been out our time and were just making the bay, a storm from the land that we had seen brewing for some hours struck the steamer, and the captain 'about ship' and kept on his course for the Danube! thus snatching me out of the very bosom of my expectant friends, and launching me into a world of fresh troubles.

I hate boasting, but, at the same time, I can't help putting it on record, that I have several times in my life greatly distinguished myself at sea, by the very powerful way I have been ill, and even now I am open to back myself to go through as much intense misery during an hour on the sea as any living man, bar a pastrycook's assistant. But man is a strange, contrary creature, and though I put myself in all the proper positions, and sat with an array of crockery before me, I never felt better than I did in this storm! And yet it was an out-and-outer, and for all night I lay huddled up, thinking I should be a dish for the crabs and shrimps before morning; and the plucky old captain

told me when it was all over that he had at times thought much the same himself.

If *I* did not suffer, the Turkish Pasha, judging from the noise he made in his cabin, did for himself and me too, and it was quite edifying to hear the way he called on Allah to sink the ship and relieve him from his troubles; and yet we had hardly been in the river two hours before he came smiling on deck, and assured me he had been quite well all night and slept beautifully. As I had no clothes with me except what I stood up in, which consisted of knee-breeches, leather gaiters, flannel jacket and shirt, I felt rather like a fish out of water when I found myself walking up the streets of Galatz! But, in spite of this, I summoned up my pluck and called on an English gentleman and his wife who lived here, and with whom I had had a correspondence on business.

They were most hospitable, gave me a good dinner and a bed, and then put me up to the way of getting home. 'There is a post boat leaving in the morning for Vienna; just walk on board and stand about quietly till she starts. As you have no luggage they will not suspect your being a passenger till too late. Then come boldly forward and ask the controller for a ticket to Tchernavoda, and when he tells you the boat does not stop there, say, "Oh, but I do, and if you don't land me like a Christian, I will jump into the river and make a swim for it, and just you look out if I am drowned."' I followed this programme to the letter, and at intervals all day, the captain, the controller, the

first and second officers, the greasers and the sailors, kept coming to me and saying, 'You must not jump,' and I answered, 'I will.' It was nearly midnight before we got opposite the village, and then the entire crew surrounded me and shouted in chorus, 'You must not jump! you must not jump!' but as I said again 'I will,' and looked all I knew how as if I meant it (of course I had no intention of doing anything so foolish), they first wavered, then stopped the boat, and finished by sending me on shore in a punt, to the sailors of which I gave half-a-crown for drink-money. In ten minutes I was at my own house, and soon fast asleep in my hutch on the verandah.

As great quantities of stone would be required the following spring for building large magazines, etc., a quarry had been opened on the Danube cliff and two hundred men kept constantly at work in it; some drilling holes for blasting, others shovelling away the *débris*, and others dressing the stone. From the first we had had a fight with the men to overcome two practices to which they were addicted. One was working with about two feet of pipe sticking out of their mouths, and the other—dare I mention it?—saying their prayers! The first of these, to say the least of it, gave a slovenly, unworkmanlike appearance to the man, and impeded the free action of his arms and tools, but the latter was destruction to all labour. The Turk is supposed to say his prayers seven times a day, and I believe the very devout ones, who have no other business, do so; but, as a rule, they only spread their carpets morning and

evening, and then kneeling down, bow backwards and forwards, repeating a fixed prayer, the meaning of which they do not understand, the greater part being in Arabic. Directly a labourer felt a little tired, down he would go on his small carpet and work away for ten minutes, and then all the others in the gang, feeling ashamed of being outdone in devoutness, would follow suit, leaving the European master or foreman standing looking on, with nothing to do. Now, two hundred men at this useful and edifying amusement use up just thirty-three hours and twenty minutes of labour, and this repeated seven times amounts to a good round sum in the day. Besides the very knowing and extra idle men would throw in a prayer at all sorts of odd times (except the breakfast and dinner hour!). It was very difficult to break the neck of this, and it was only done by refusing to employ Turks who said their prayers. We also let the men all clearly understand that all pipes seen on the works would be confiscated. No notice was taken of a man with a quiet little cigarette in his mouth, for that did not hinder him, and it helped to sweeten labour. The quarry was worked with two faces, with a piece of the cliff intervening, so that when shots were fired in one and the stone was creeping and coming down, the men could be employed in the other. One day I had superintended the charging and firing of some unusually large shots, and had been very successful, as the face was all shaken, and huge masses hung ready to fall in a few minutes. All the men were quietly at work on the other face when

we heard an enormous block fall, and then a dozen Turks exclaimed, 'Oh, Osman Agha!' On enquiry they told me that whilst my back was turned, Osman Agha had slipped into the other quarry to smoke his pipe, feeling sure I should not go there and discover him. Poor Osman Agha! it had effectually put his pipe out, and all that was ever seen of him was a mass of rags and pounded flesh, that were scraped with a shovel from the flat surface of a stone of about forty tons weight that had fallen on him. 'Poor fellow!' said the native workmen; 'it was no fault of his, no one can resist the evil eye; so in future we will set up the skeleton head of a cow, and work in safety.'

Recklessness to danger was not entirely confined to the natives, and we often had hard work to prevent the English foremen from getting killed. After a charge had been prepared in a hole, and the fuse fired, a longing would seize on these men to have a look how it was getting on, and after restraining themselves for five minutes and believing firmly that half-an-hour had passed, they would creep nearer and nearer, till, just as they were in front of the hole, off it would go, and the venturesome idiots get rolled over. They were a tough lot, and somehow always managed to escape with a few severe contusions, which were so little thought of, that they would do the very same thing next week. A charged hole with a burning fuse in it acted on Jack Striver as a red flag does on a bull, and nothing would stop his rushing at it, and over and over again he was hurt. Do what we would, accidents were always

happening to the natives, for being utterly unaccustomed to the ways of European work, they were like children and required as much care, and if the consequences had not been so disastrous, it would have been laughable to see grown-up men doing such foolish things.

The stone from the quarry was brought away down an inclined tram, on small railway waggons, to the place where we intended building the next year. One day I was coming on to the works, and observed a waggon with about two tons of stone on it, running by its own impetus past the proper stopping-place. Standing close by was a Tartar. I called to him to stop it, and he appeared to me to walk up to the waggon, put his hand on it, and then, quietly moving on a few steps towards me, stand and stare in my face. I asked him if he had not heard me tell him to stop the waggon. 'Oh, yes, Tchellaby! I heard, and did my best to stop it; just look at my foot!' Accustomed as I was to horrible sights I turned quite sick, for there, standing firmly in the dust, was the poor fellow with all his toes gone! Thinking, because the waggon moved slowly, it must be easily stopped, he placed his foot on the rails under the iron wheel. I called to some men to carry him to his hut close by, but he laughed, and said 'he had not come to that yet;' and marched off with scarcely a limp. We had the wound bathed for hours with cold water, and then bound it up in wet linen, and for some days all went well, but then tetanus set in, and the poor fellow died. I was very sorry for him. From the first moment the accident happened till he

died he showed no sign of pain, and let me dress the wound without flinching, and yet he must have suffered terribly. At the same time I am myself quite sure that different men have different capacity for feeling pain, and what would be torture to one would scarcely be heeded by another.

I have often noticed this in Englishmen, and have now in my mind a great rough blacksmith, with lots of courage and 'go' in him, but who would sit on his anvil and writhe with pain if he knocked the skin off his knuckle, and do little more work all day. This man was sensitive to pain. Again I can mention three English gentlemen who each deliberately pulled out a firmly fixed double tooth with a common pair of carpenter's pincers, because the aching annoyed them, and these men I am sure had not the same power of feeling pain. All the people of the East feel pain much less acutely than Europeans, and through this have gained a character for stoicism. I think, though, we have the pull over them, for by pluck we get through our troubles, and our capacity for enjoying pleasures is ten times greater than theirs.

CHAPTER XXIV.

An involuntary bath—A Frenchman of noble birth—Service in the log-church.

ARRANGEMENTS had been made with the Danube Steam Navigation Company for their slow boats to stop at Tchernavoda, and though this was very convenient for us, as it opened a direct road into Europe, yet it often inundated us with passengers, who came up to Kustendjie by the occasional steamers, and had to wait day after day in uncertainty for the river boats. Some of these were very good fellows, and we were glad to put them up and do all we could for them, but others plagued our lives out. Having nothing to do, and fearing to go far from the river, they would lounge about, talk to the men, and in a hundred ways retard the work. On one occasion I was engaged in running out a landing-stage into the river for the boats to stop at, and had shoved a balk of timber well out over the water; and, till a pile could be driven to support the far end and prevent its tipping, we passed a rope round the butt end and lashed it to some timbers. Early in the day I had been annoyed by a young Greek merchant from Constantinople, who was waiting for the boat, and, not

content with chatting to the men and sneering at everything he saw, but he must pull their tools about and get constantly in the way. He was 'most genteelly' dressed in the latest Pera fashion, that is to say, a fez cap stuck on the top of his well-curled and pomatumed locks; an open white waistcoat, from the pockets of which dangled about half-a-pound of flash chains and appendages; blue frock coat of superfine cloth; fawn-coloured brigs, and square-toed, patent leather shoes. His luggage consisted of a black portmanteau about the size of a sandwich case, and containing a razor, a comb, and a clean collar; but as he was only going as far as Bucharest, and would be back in a fortnight, he thought it ample, especially as the front of his shirt was ironed both sides, and so would go to reverse.

I politely explained to him that we were very busy, and asked him to be so good as to move on and not talk to the men. He looked me up and down for a full minute, and, apparently satisfying himself that I was 'very small beer,' did not condescend to make any reply. Constantly I heard some such remark from the men as, 'By your leave, Sir,' 'You are in the way there,' or 'Be so good as to leave the tram, as we want to move the waggons.' My temper (usually particularly sweet) now began to boil up a bit, when I saw my friend walk down to the balk that was suspended over the river. He examined it a moment, and apparently being satisfied at the way it was secured, proceeded to walk slowly along the flat face, about fifteen inches wide.

As I stood watching him, I saw one of the men go

up to a mischievous little Albanian urchin, who was cutting pegs with a small adze, and evidently whispered to him to cut the rope. In a moment he took in the position of affairs, and with a diabolical grin quietly slipped up and gave a chop, whilst the Greek stood at the extreme end of the balk, amusing himself by the intellectual employment of spitting into the river. Slowly but surely the balk began to tip, and the Greek, arresting a good spit half way, stretched out his hands as if to grasp the river bank opposite, about a mile distant, and then with one despairing howl plunged into the water!

All was excitement in a moment, for on his coming to the top it was apparent that he was but a poor swimmer, that he was out of his depth, and the river running at four miles an hour. Fortunately loose timber was lying about, and, throwing him a piece, he seized it and supported himself till he caught the end of a rope that was thrown to him, when he was safely dragged ashore. But, oh, what a difference a little water had made in him! All his swagger had been washed out, his love-locks had turned to rat's tails, and, turn his shirt which way he would, it could only look like a dirty rag. Amid shouts of laughter from all the workmen he crept away, and some time later I saw him sitting on the grass in a state of nature, while his bedrabbled clothes hung on a bush hard by to dry!

One of the last boats that stopped at Tchernavoda that summer landed a French gentleman, who immediately looked me up, and informed me that 'he was of

noble birth, of unimpeachable honesty, and ravished with a consuming admiration for the sons of Albion. He was a legitimist, and his feelings had been so strong that he had withdrawn a large fortune from France, rather than live under such a low-bred usurper as Napoleon, and had invested it in estates in Wallachia. He was now living in Bucharest, with Madame his wife (also of noble birth), and his Belle Mère, a "dame superbe." Instigated by this last intelligent *spirituelle* creature, he had come to inform the directors of the Railway that on his newly-acquired estates were vast forests, the trees of which were living oak sleepers, and though he despised commerce in any form, yet to oblige the sons of Albion he would sell them,' etc. Being greatly impressed by his language and princely bearing (he really was a very aristocratic-looking man), I took him to my cottage, gave him dinner and a bed, and the next day sent him on to Kustendjie. In a few days he returned, and told me he had made a contract for supplying many thousand sleepers, and that he was going back to make arrangements for cutting them. Two months later he returned and informed Buyuk Tchellaby that all the sleepers were cut, and that owing to his having remitted large sums of money to some august personage in France for political purposes, he was a little short of cash, and much was required in advance by the man he had contracted with for the transport. 'Could Monsieur let him have 2,000*l*?'

'No! Well, 1,000*l*?'

'Yes, certainly, when the gentleman I shall at once

despatch returns, and reports favourably on the sleepers. We are not in the habit of buying "a pig in a poke."'

I was in the room and really felt squashed at the proud, injured, pitying, yet forgiving look this superb creature cast on my brother, as he answered:

'Well, I will wait. You are the real sufferer, for will not you regret your unjust suspicions when your inspector returns? But, as this is a dull little place, I will run down to Galatz and spend a few days with my dear friend Prince C——. I shall, however, require a little money for the trip, and to enable me to appear with becoming dignity in his splendid place. So just let me have a bagatelle—just 100*l.* No! you won't give even that? Sacr-r-r-r-ré!' but at this my feelings were too much for me, and I made a bolt of it. I afterwards heard that Buyuk Tchellaby was obdurate as granite, and neither big words nor bluster could make him open the safe. I walked about all the afternoon with my new friend, and finished by asking him to dinner, an invitation he eagerly accepted; but on my afterwards telling him he would have the pleasure of meeting a compatriot, Monsieur Bichelet, he was suddenly taken slightly indisposed, and I had to submit to a *tête-à-tête* dinner, and listen to M. Bichelet's discourse on French adventurers, who he assured me were as common as blackberries and as cunning as Armenians.

R—— started the same day for Bucharest, and on his return he reported that there were no such estates

as my friend's in Wallachia, and that the only thing known of him was that after having lived at free quarters all the winter at the Hotel Hugue, he had suddenly disappeared, leaving an old portmanteau behind him filled with stones and unpaid bills. We were unable to impart this pleasant information to him, for on applying at the lodgings where he had been staying, we were told he had been suddenly called away on urgent political business two days before, and that he had taken his landlord's watch with him.

There were now living at Kustendjie, and on the line, a considerable number of Englishmen with their wives and children, but up to the middle of the summer the only religious service anyone had had a chance of attending was the funeral, and there were many who were anxious this state of things should be amended. A meeting was held, at which it was decided that as there was no hope for the present of obtaining the permanent services of a clergyman, a service should be held on the works every Sunday morning, at which the prayers and lessons for the day should be read by one of the congregation. At the same time a gentleman undertook to write to Mr. Curties, a clergyman, who had long resided at Constantinople, working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and beg him, if possible, to pay us a visit from time to time. This was more particularly desired, as several children had been born at Kustendjie, and were unbaptised. At first there was some difficulty in fixing on a place to hold the service in, as most of the buildings were unfinished,

or for some reason unavailable. Close to the sea-beach were two large parallel rows of sleepers, and by laying planks across on the top, a rough sort of room was formed that, if not quite as perfect as some of our cathedrals, at least provided shelter from rain and sun. Then what more could be desired for seats than sleepers laid in rows up the primitive church, and what better reading desk than a packing case placed at the end? Well, such as it was, we held service there every Sunday, till winter storms drove us into a magazine that had just been finished, and from this time it was a rare exception if a Sunday passed without morning prayers being read.

Going to church in England is a very simple thing for most men, and few will be able to realise what a stir the first service occasioned in this little community. On that morning few took the usual extra Sunday winks, and all were up betimes and wardrobes carefully gone over. Old razors that had become rusty for want of use were stropped and restropped, and many a chin that had been covered with a scrub was reduced to a state of semi-rawness, and smarted and stung all day. White shirts, stand-up collars, and black coats were absolutely necessary, and here and there some unfortunate, who was minus one of these, was to be seen racing about to borrow of more fortunate friends, and when at last we were all rigged out and on our way to church, the green-eyed monster crept amongst us, at the sight of a young dandy, who actually had on a pair of kid gloves!

After the line had been opened a few years, and a

permanent staff settled at Kustendjie, permission was gained from the directors to take down the partitions of the various rooms in the iron house, and convert it into a building specially set apart for the Church of England Service; and when I was at Kustendjie about five years ago, I had the pleasure of hearing a clergyman perform the duty, whose services were divided between Kustendjie and Galatz. Mr. Curties most kindly and at great personal inconvenience, came up to us from time to time during those early days, and soon made himself acquainted with all the English people and baptised the children, and his visits were always looked forward to with pleasure by the whole community. Not only did he do this, but he exerted himself greatly to bring about our having a resident clergyman, and though his kind wishes were not altogether realised, it was, I believe, through him and the S. P. G. that we at last had one in conjunction with Galatz.

While writing on this subject let me remark that this Society, as far as I have been able to observe, is doing grand work in foreign parts, and is carrying religious instruction and comfort to many an exiled English family, who would be utterly without these blessings if it were not for their help.

CHAPTER XXV.

The waters of Allicapou—The ague—Perfect cures for fever—Shooting—Monopolising a bed—A burglar.

HALF-WAY between Kustendjie and Tchernavoda is the village of Allicapou, celebrated all over European Turkey for the peculiar properties of its water. In taste it is exactly like any other good water, and it is only by close observation that its virtues have been discovered. 'He that drinks of it nourishes his brain,' and from that day becomes one of the wise ones of the earth, and though I have repeatedly done so, and felt no peculiar mental vigour afterwards, I believe in it as firmly as I do in any of the numerous filthy waters I have consumed at various baths in Germany. Let any speculative doctor run up an 'Establishment' in the village and I will guarantee he will soon have patients flock to him, and he will become richer, and they wiser, if poorer, before they leave him! Since the days when the waters of Jordan were rejected, and I daresay before then, man has been sceptical of great cures easily obtained, and I plead guilty to having for years laughed at the Allicapou waters, though they

had been potent enough to give rise to the Turkish proverb addressed to all extra-great fools: 'Go, drink of the waters of Allicapou.' Ah, how I now regret it! If I had only made a pilgrimage there directly I arrived in Turkey, I might have avoided the numerous follies of which I was guilty, and not inhaled the seeds of that curse to my existence—the ague. But I was young, I was strong, and I was foolish, and that wading after snipe through fetid bogs, sleeping all night on the wet ground, and doing a thousand other foolish things, could hurt me never for a moment entered my head. But if my *head* was thus dense, my body was not, for from the first ague got into it, and there it sticks, and there it will, I am firmly convinced, till either it or something else has shunted me off the rails of this life. For some hours before an attack of ague comes on, a man feels particularly bright and well, and both mentally and bodily fit for lots of work. Then a feeling of weariness gradually steals over him, and he begins to yawn and stretch himself. This increases, and at the same time he turns cold and shudders, all his bones begin to ache and he cannot keep still for a minute. He wraps himself up, but even on the hottest day in summer shakes so much that, before he can drink to allay the terrible thirst, the water is spilt from the glass. This state of things continues with increasing strength, sometimes one hour, sometimes four. Then suddenly he bursts into a perspiration, and in half an hour the moisture pours from him as from an over-charged sponge; sheets, blankets, and even mattress

are soon soaked through. During all this time he has racking headache and great nausea, and is often delirious. In two or three hours the attack is over, but the Hercules of the morning can now scarcely stand for weakness. The ague rarely kills, but it so undermines the constitution that few men who have had it badly ever enjoy really good health again, and for years afterwards are subject to attacks of it. Quinine is the only thing that will relieve it, but no one is ever cured by even that. Three or four grains taken in a glass of sherry each morning is a good preventive, but when taken to cut short existing fever, large doses must be used, and I believe the treatment we followed was very good. The day after the attack we took sixteen grains in two doses; the following day eight grains, on the third, sixteen grains, and on the fourth eight grains, and after that four grains each morning. Some people cannot take so much as this; but it is necessary to manage as heavy a dose as possible between the attacks, as one must not take it when the fever is coming on.

Every second man in the East has a perfect cure for the fever, and even at this distance of time I could count up dozens, many of which I was idiot enough to try, and the only wonder is I am here to tell the tale. I have bolted huge pills made of cobwebs, drank a decoction of raw brandy and pounded garlic in equal proportions, rendered efficacious by standing all night under the moon's rays, and have carried two raw potatoes in my trousers pockets, besides numberless

other things, all more or less hurtful, that have been recommended to me as quite infallible.

Once, when I was in Italy, a kind aunt took me in hand, and insisted on having made up for me a prescription that she had received from an old Indian officer. The chief ingredient was Venetian treacle (whatever that may be), to which was added jalap, turpentine, castor oil, brandy, essence of garlic, and about twenty other things that I have now forgotten. Altogether there was about a pint of this fearful concoction to be taken the last thing before getting into bed. I had a hard struggle for my life, and it was only by assuring the dear old lady that I was no longer a child (I was twenty-eight), and that for the sake of morality she must keep out of my room and forego the pleasure of seeing me take it to the 'very, very bottom,' that I was at last trusted alone with the precious jar full of abominations. A painful death stared me in the face, but the window was open. As I would not hurt her tender feelings for the world, and besides have expectations, I will only say that the huge burdock in the back-yard into which my window looked withered and died after that night. I was not cured, but I had the pleasure of seeing the old colonel 'cut' a week later for being 'such an impostor.'

After the Crimean Tartars had settled on the Dobrudja, and had ploughed up large tracts of the virgin soil, the fever perfectly raged at Kustendjie, and the works were at times brought nearly to a standstill. The Europeans suffered most, but, even among the natives,

half the gangs would be incapacitated by it, and our old Italian doctor was nearly worked to death measuring out and distributing quinine. Since those days I have tried various German and other baths, all warranted to give great relief—and so they did, but only to my *purse*, and I still have the fever.

Throughout the autumn R—— and I snatched as much time as we could from the works for shooting, and as we had received two first-rate setters from England, we often made splendid bags, though now, that we were not by any means the only sportsmen at Kustendjie, we had to go further afield for them. In a wild country, though there may be plenty of game, it is not always easy to find it, and till the ground is well known whole days are constantly spent in looking for it. Partridges especially have a partiality for certain places and may always be found there, whilst other places that look exactly the same may be beaten for days and not a bird killed. One of our favourite grounds was about ten miles from Kustendjie, at the commencement of the valley that led to Tchernavoda, and here we would kill from fifteen to twenty-five brace of birds in the day.

Often, when work was over and we had the next day clear, we would hire a *teleki*, and, taking a basket of provisions, drive in the cool of the evening to the village of Hassanchire, where we would curl up under a haystack for the night. We would be out betimes next morning and would soon find birds on the few fields of stubble, and, driving them into the small ravines

on the slopes of the hills, could pick them up one or two at a time. On one occasion I had gone up there with a friend, and sadly disgusted were we in the morning to discover he had left his powder flask at home. We shared what I had brought, and after killing fifteen brace, had to leave five or six coveys marked down and go home! After shooting here till the birds got wild, we determined to try fresh ground five miles further on. Accordingly, R——, myself, and a friend drove one evening to Murfatlah, where a Pole had offered to provide a room for us. When night arrived we were somewhat surprised to find he had prepared but one bed for the three, and this consisted only of some planks laid on trestles, over which were spread a few rugs. Fortunately it was tolerably wide, so, drawing lots to see who should sleep in the middle, and thus be subject to the kicks of the other two, we turned in, I being the unlucky one. Now, I have a peculiarity about sleeping. Whenever the bed is exceptionally bad and the chances all against me, I sleep like a top, and whilst doing so kick madly. Before an hour was over I had the bed to myself, and passed a peaceful, quiet night till daybreak, when I awoke, to find my two companions sitting on the floor in opposite corners of the room, pouring volumes of abuse on my unconscious head.

We were soon out with our guns, and walked and walked, first in the bottoms, then on the hills, then tried some stubbles and then the grass, but except one small covey found nothing, and were thoroughly glad

to discover the cart standing at the bottom of a deep little valley and sit ourselves down to lunch. The two dogs, like ourselves, were disgusted with the morning's work, and curled themselves up in the shade of the cart, and winked and blinked at the steep hill-side opposite. Just as we had finished I saw 'Bounce' suddenly jump up, and look enquiringly to the right, and, turning in the same direction, I there saw a perfect swarm of partridges coming on in great confusion, closely followed by a fine falcon. They scattered themselves among the stunted scrub on the face of the slope, whilst their enemy hovered over and kept them in place. It was already two P.M., so no time was to be lost, and in a few minutes 'Bounce' was standing and 'Bell' backing, as if they were in position for their photographs, and as long as we dared put off our return to Kustendjie we fired and loaded, while the men picked up the game; and though we killed thirty-three brace of birds, there seemed to be as many when we left off as when we began. It was just a sportsman's paradise, and the valley ever after was known among us as the 'happy hunting ground,' and over and over again we visited it and always returned with heavy bags.

In the following spring we had a visit from a gentleman named S——, who had been shooting in the Levant during the latter part of the winter, and now came to the Dobrudja with the intention of collecting birds' eggs. He was a splendid ornithologist, and could distinguish most birds at a great distance even on the wing, and there was not an egg in Europe he could not

identify; besides this he was a clever and amusing companion, and we were delighted to have him with us. While at Kustendjie he stayed with R——, and after working that side of the country he came on to me at Tchernavoda.

Rather an exciting incident took place while he was with R——, in which they both had a share. From time to time in every town in Turkey, Constantinople not excepted, a rumour is spread that the Mussulmen have determined to assassinate all the Christians, and it travels from mouth to mouth till it is the talk of the whole town for days. It then quietly dies away, and for years perhaps no more is heard of it. Where these rumours originate it is impossible to discover, and, as no one pays the least heed to them, they do little harm, except that of keeping up animosity between the two races.

For some days such a rumour had been afloat, and was just at its height, when in the middle of the night R——'s Mussulman servant rushed into his bedroom, and awoke him with tears and sobs, saying, 'Up, Tchellaby, up! the Turks have begun the killing. I have just been told so by a friend, and oh, I can hear the shouts at the other side of the compound!'

True enough there was a precious hubbub going on, so R—— jumped up, and, calling S——, told him in a few words what was supposed to be the matter. In a few minutes both were dressed, and, with pistols loaded and lots of spare ammunition, they sallied forth, and, rousing up the inmates of the English cottages as they

passed, rushed across the compound in the direction of Jack Striver's house, from which the shouts appeared to come. Arriving there, they found the passage and front room crammed full of people in all sorts of undress, and in the midst Jack himself haranguing and gesticulating frantically, but he was in such a rage that not one word in ten was distinguishable. A few sharp words from R—— produced a lull, and then, turning the mob out of the house, he managed by some direct questions to extract the following account. 'You see, sir, my wife and I had been in bed and asleep some time, when she sat up in bed and screamed out, "Up Jack, quick! There has been a man creeping about on his hands and knees, and he has just gone out at the door; see, it is open." I jumped up and groped about on the drawers where I had put my revolver over night; not finding it, I rushed downstairs just in time to see a man bolt out of the kitchen window, and by the time I had opened the door he had disappeared, and all was quiet. I returned upstairs, and then learned from my wife that a box had been dragged from under the bed, opened, and a bag stolen from it, containing 110*l.*, which she, unknown to me, had saved.'

Such was the substance of Jack's account, but I could not have told it in his exact words had I been there to hear them, for it would have passed the power of pen to describe his broad north-country dialect, intermixed with exclamations and gesticulations, and interrupted by his wife, small children, and one or two women, who all joined in telling the tale at the same time.

Taking a candle R—— and S—— proceeded to examine the window from which the thief had made his exit, and just outside discovered a red jacket and a pair of shoes, which, on being brought to the light, were at once recognised by Jack's little boy as the property of a Tartar who lived in a hut near the sea, and who worked on the line. Taking one or two Englishmen with them, R—— and S—— proceeded to the hut, and, pushing open the door and showing a lantern, they found the owner sitting up in bed as if he had just awakened. They told him to get up and follow them, and, on his doing so without a jacket, told him to put one on. As he could not find that useful article of dress, and as little Striver said he was sure of his man, they took him to the Head of the Zaptiehs, and there left him in charge, while they returned to finish their night's rest, feeling heartily thankful that the cause of the disturbance had proved so far less serious than they had at first supposed.

As soon as the Governor was up next morning Jack obtained his permission to visit the prisoner, that he might use his eloquence to induce him to tell what he had done with the plunder. Between the fascination of that eye that pierced him through, and the dread of the execution of the fearful threats bestowed on him, the man at once confessed he had taken the money, but said he had been put up to it by a Tartar lad who was Jack's servant, and had discovered it one day while roaming about the house, when all the family were from home. He also told Jack that if he climbed down the

town well he would find a hole in the wall near the water, in which the money was hidden. This proved correct, so far that the bag with 100*l.* was there, but no amount of 'eye' or threats could elicit what had become of the odd 10*l.* or the revolver, neither of which ever turned up.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The sacer's nest—Suspended over a precipice—Black stork's nest—Old Bob—Jack, a sheep-dog and sailor.

During the time S—— stayed with me he worked hard at collecting, and I sometimes accompanied him on long excursions, and our labours were rewarded by getting some really good eggs. On one occasion we crossed the river in a dug-out, and searched the willows and aspens on the great island opposite. When we were about to return we saw a big nest on the topmost branches of a tall tree. After S—— had examined it with his glass, he pronounced it to be an old one, but being full of energy, and instigated perhaps by the nature of the monkey that Darwin allots us for a forefather, I offered to run up and make quite sure. The ascent was not very easy, and my difficulties increased when I got to the nest, for it spread so wide around my head I could not see into it, and I had to pull away one side (composed of sticks, many of them an inch in diameter) before I could put my hand into it. Whilst doing this I was startled by S—— firing his gun close by the tree, and I saw him run to pick up some bird. He soon shouted for me to take special care, as he had shot a female of the *Falco Sacer*, which had flown from

the nest, disturbed by my working under her. Little by little I made my way through the old eagle's nest, and there in the middle found five dark-red eggs. Not being provided with a string and basket, as all nesters should be, to lower down the eggs, I had to come down with one at a time for fear of a breakage, and by the time I had landed them all in safety, the monkey nature was pretty well out of me.

The sacer, though a rare bird, is to be found in many collections, but I believe these five eggs were the first ever secured by a collector, and were the more valuable from having been so thoroughly identified by getting the old bird.

Curiously enough S—— was but a poor performer at the climbing, but there never was a better cragsman, and he and I worked the face of the cliff for ten miles up the Danube; and though it was late, and therefore many of the nests hatched off, we managed to collect a good many eggs of both the griffin and Egyptian vulture. And I am open to back the latter bird to smell offensively against any other in Europe.

Just at the highest and steepest part of this cliff we discovered a nest in a big hole, and going to the top S—— passed his leg through a loop in the end of a rope, and tying it higher up round under his arms, crept to the edge of the overhanging cliff, and I, with the help of a Tartar, lowered him down. When he had secured the eggs, we commenced to haul him up, but now our task became more difficult. The rock was surmounted by sloping turf, and by the time S—— was within a

few feet of the top, the rope had cut so deep into the ground we could not raise him an inch. Heavens, how he shouted! 'Pull, pull, haul away there! Why are you stopping? I am spinning round so fast, I shall soon be too giddy to hang on.' But our answers and explanations were blown away on the wind. The rope was far too short to lower him to the bottom, so there he hung some fifty feet above huge, jagged rocks, twisting round like a joint on the spit, and like the joint he was fast getting done! At last, sitting down and holding the rope fast between my legs in front of me, I managed to slip forward to the very edge of the cliff, and then standing up and calling to the Tartar to hold hard, I gave a lift, and just succeeded in lifting the rope out of the ground, and pulling it up, till S—— could get hold of the top, and thus help to lift himself. It was a near shave, and even now I turn hot when I think what might have happened!

Two miles up the valley, on the left of the railroad, there are some precipitous cliffs, on the face of which a square hole may be seen about midway down. One day, while we were nesting on the sloping hills opposite, a black stork passed over our heads, and winged its way direct to this hole, where it alighted. We were soon at the foot of the cliff, and, throwing up a stone, the bird flew out in that peculiarly stealthy way that denotes the presence of a nest or eggs. There was no possibility of getting up from the bottom, so we walked round to the top, and, after a most precarious climb down a crack on the face of the rock, found our-

selves in a room about twelve feet square, evidently hewn by man out of the solid rock. Through this room was another exactly similar, except that at the far side there was a solid stone bench, or couch. We did not take much notice of this at the time, for we were engrossed by two white eggs lying in a hollow in the middle of the first room. S—— dragged me away at once, and, when we were again safe on the top, told me he had determined to leave the eggs and come again in the morning, with the hope of finding the bird had laid a third.

The up-boat was due next day by which S—— had settled to leave for England, so, putting his things together in the morning, and sending them down to the quay, we mounted our horses, and about eleven A.M. arrived at the cliff. I stopped below holding the horses, while S—— went round and climbed down and into the room. He at once reappeared at the entrance, and I shall not easily forget the look of mingled disgust and despair depicted on his face. Some fiend in human form had sucked both eggs! He soon gathered his wits together, and then asked me to fasten up his horse below, and gallop home and fetch two hen's eggs, 'for there is no knowing but the bird may come and lay to them.'

I did so at once, and after placing the eggs in the nest, stationed a man on the hill at a little distance to keep off intruders. I got back to the river just in time to see S—— leave by the boat, and to assure him if I got an egg I would send it to him in London, and I

am glad to say I was able to do this, for the bird laid two more eggs in the nest, which I secured.

We soon after opened large quarries in this cliff, and to this day they are known as the 'Black Stork Quarries.' I may mention for the information of non-ornithological readers, that though the egg of the ordinary stork is common enough, that of the black stork was up to this time in no collection in England, and thus arose our anxiety to procure one.

When leaving S—— presented me with 'Old Bob,' a splendid English pointer, though his good looks had forsaken him just then. He had caught the mange on his travels, and not having been properly attended to, it had spread till he had not a hair left on him, and his skin was seamed and scarred by innumerable open sores, and it was painful to see the poor beast scratching and tearing at himself, first with one hind leg and then with the other. It was a question with me whether I should not shoot him to put him out of his suffering, but I determined to have one attempt at curing him first. I procured a quantity of flour of sulphur, and, mixing it with oil, had him rubbed every day from head to toe with it, besides giving him about half-an-ounce each day internally. In one week he was cured of the mange, and very soon his coat came on him thick and shining, but the horrid disease left him very deaf. This did not much matter, for Bob was so clever he knew quite as much as I did about finding game, and I daresay would have been put out and vexed with me had he heard the orders I shouted at

him. He and I had many a good day's sport together, and I was sorry indeed when at a ripe old age he was carried off by dropsy.

Besides Bob, I had a kennel full of dogs of all sorts, among which 'Jack' is worthy of special notice. I was walking by the Danube one day when I met a remarkably handsome Transylvanian dog, very much resembling the old English sheep dog with the short tail. He was a fierce-looking customer, and I did not much relish the wistful way he eyed me, but, being conversant with dog's lingo, I wished him the top of the morning, and he at once trotted up and entered into an amiable conversation, in which he made me understand that his former master had left him in Turkey when returning to Transylvania, and he was now on the look out for a situation, and did not care how soon he found one, as he felt awfully peckish, and his ribs were getting much nearer the surface than he liked. I told him I did not require his services, but that he was most welcome to come home with me and have the run of the kitchen, whilst he looked out for a new master, provided he kept on friendly terms with Old Bob. He accepted my offer with gratitude, and for a year behaved beautifully, though he did not exert himself much to get into service. At the end of this time an English gun-boat from Galatz stopped for a few days at Tchernavoda, and with my consent Jack's name was entered in its books, and he bade me good-bye with many hearty thanks and prettily-expressed compliments.

A year or two later I was told by an old friend that, whilst walking in a quiet lane in Kent he overtook a sailor accompanied by a very remarkable-looking dog, and, observing to the man that he had never seen one like it, he was answered thus:

'I des'say not, sir—he is a werry pe-couliar fellow. You see, sir, he and me have just been paid off from H. B. M.'s ship at Gravesend, on which we have been serving as able-bodied seamen in the Danube and Black Sea. It's now 'bout two year ago since we were anchored opposite a place called Tchernavoda, on the Danube. I and a mate of mine were taking a pe-ruse on shore, just alooking for curiososies, such as land tortosies and snakes, when we were joined by this here gentleman, and as we were a little short-handed on the gun-boat, we persuaded him to enter on the books, and from that time to this he has done good service for her Majesty, and has never once failed to keep his watch. We are now going to see the old folk, who are small farmers; and as Jack here was a shepherd before he took to a seafaring life, I have no doubt the old gentleman will be werry glad of his help, and he may finish his days there if he don't wish to join the service again.' This was the last I heard of my old friend Jack.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Georgey's savings—A love story—The Tartar emigration.

'A THOUSAND pardons for troubling your great mind with such a small subject, but would Tchellaby deign to say how much the savings he has taken care of for me for some years amount to? Twenty pounds! Marshallah, what luck! I am now a rich man, and shall have no more trouble. Would Tchellaby further deign to hand it over to me? Ah! may God reward you a thousand-fold.'

Thus spoke Georgey; he of the roofless mouth, of the flat nose, bald pate, and short bandy legs, a capital servant, though a sad rogue.

'What was he going to do with his money?' 'Oh! invest it.' 'In what?' 'I don't know, Tchellaby, but my fortune is made. My friend, Jennie Dunea, the Armenian, he that keeps the café on the cliff, has offered to pay me twenty per cent. per month, and gives me his word that the capital shall be repaid whenever I like to call it in. Jennie Dunea, a rogue! Oh, Tchellaby! is he not my friend and brother? Granted that all Armenians are rogues, but this is an exception. Then, Tchellaby, excuse my remarking that I am no longer a

child. I must look forward to marriage to establish my name, and have an heir to my future riches. Is there a young woman! Yes, Tchellaby, there is. Who? why Maria Vlatt. Does she like me? Well, she says not, in fact she says she hates me, but then she has such stout, strong legs and arms, and can work so hard, and one can't expect everything.'

That night Jennie Dunea received the money in the back kitchen, when no witnesses were by, and the next morning when Georgey, in the pride of his heart, strutted into the café on his way to market, and mentioned the transaction of the previous evening, not only did Jennie Dunea forget all about it, but a friend came forward to swear he had spent the entire evening in his house, and therefore it was impossible Georgey could have given him the money when he said he did. 'It is a rogue's trick,' said the Armenian, 'to extort money from me, and if you ever mention it again I will have you before the Governor.'

Poor Georgey! your 'friend and brother' had done you, but your trouble and anxiety as a man of fortune and financier were soon over, and you could at once commence to save and pilfer another capital, to be taken from you, by just such another friend and brother!

Georgey thought the loss of his money was no reason for foregoing the delights of matrimony, and at once redoubled his attentions to the stout-limbed Maria, and spent his very first savings in buying her a musquitoe net, thus paying her a delicate attention and providing for his own future comfort.

One morning G—— was surprised to hear that old Vlatt and Maria were in the kitchen waiting to see him, and on going out was told that Master Georgey (who had been away on 'urgent family affairs' for two days) had eloped over night with this lovely young creature, and that after walking all night and covering forty miles, the old father found her staring into the shop windows of Kustendjie, and admiring the fashions therein displayed. Georgey himself now arrived on the scene, and what between his violent declarations of love and high appreciation of the work to be got out of his future bride, old Vlatt's anger, and Maria's stolid indifference, confusion reigned supreme, and to settle matters all the contending party were sent before the Pasha.

After hearing both sides of the case from old Vlatt and Georgey, the Pasha asked the girl what she wished, saying at the same time, she should do as she liked. Maria replied without the least hesitation that she would go back with her father, she hated Georgey, and only came away with him to see the shops of which she had heard so much.

If the bonds and fetters of matrimony were thus snatched from Georgey, those of the Padishah were within his reach, and he would make a try for them; so he up with a three-legged stool and launched it at the loved one's head, who, gracefully bobbing, let it go crash through the window behind her! Old Vlatt marched Maria home that evening, and Georgey took a month's holiday, this time on 'urgent *state* affairs,' and was constantly to be seen adorned by a chain on

his leg, cleaning the mud from the streets. When the month had expired, Georgey took one more day's leave, for '*family* affairs,' and then returned with Maria as his bride, having that morning married her with the full consent of her parents and friends! So runs the course of true love in Turkey.

Ever since the termination of the Crimean War, parties of Tartars had arrived at intervals, as emigrants from that land of great fights, and had chiefly settled at a new town named (after the then ruling Sultan) Medjideer, which was situated on our line, about twenty-five miles from Kustendjie. From merely a khan, a mosque, and about twenty huts, they had soon changed it into a dense mass of dwellings stretching away from the pestilential marsh for a mile over the hills, and the surrounding grass plains were transformed into thriving corn-fields. Like the Israelites of old they must, I suppose, have sent back their spies laden with grapes, pomegranates and figs, or at least water-melons, to their brethren at home, for soon we heard rumours that the whole Tartar population of the Crimea were on the stir and might shortly be expected amongst us. I do not know if they were invited to come to Turkey by their co-religionists, or were thrust out of the Crimea by their old masters; there may have been both motives at work. The Russians perhaps wished to be rid of people that were of an alien religion, and who did not reverence the Czar as a sort of god. And the Turks, if one can give them credit for so much wisdom and forethought, may have wished to have them to cultivate

these vast plains and strengthen the constantly-diminishing Mussulman race. However it came about, I congratulate the Turks, for at small expense and little trouble they accomplished the above, and acquired a quiet and industrious class of inhabitants, and I also congratulate the Czar on being able to spare such a useful and numerous population.

It is not surprising, but is to be regretted, that the Turkish Government never made the slightest preparation for the thousands that were known to be coming, and when the first instalment arrived at Kustendjie, no food had been prepared, no shelter provided, and not even a bullock cart in readiness to move the poor creatures from the sea-beach where they were landed.

The first settlers had been as the few bees that buzz about the hive before the swarm, but now the whole mass was on the wing, and within a few weeks eighty thousand Tartars were landed at Kustendjie alone, and vast numbers at different towns on the Danube.

There is always something very melancholy and distressing when an old country has to be forsaken, and a new home sought for beyond the seas. Old friends, animate and inanimate, have to be looked at with loving eyes for the last time, old associations and pleasures given up, and last, but not least, there is always the vast family of the dead in their quiet graves to be left behind. And all this to be gone through for a dim and uncertain future. It is a foreshadowing of that last emigration we shall all have to make some

day, but the future of this world can offer no such bright spots as we may hope for there.

The Tartar is a stolid, matter-of-fact creature, and I daresay would not feel this so keenly as we of the West; besides they are of a nomadic race; but they must have been possessed more or less with these feelings, which were not calculated to help them in the trials before them.

Wretched, ill-found Turkish steamers and sailing ships had been provided for their transit, and there was no food or water except what was brought by the emigrants themselves. Each ship was crowded above and below with a living mass tightly wedged together by bales of bedding, farming implements, carts, and not infrequently by spiteful, screaming Bactrian camels, which were the only live stock brought over.

For days these poor creatures lay huddled together, suffering all the tortures of sea-sickness, and in an atmosphere one might *see* and *feel*, to say nothing of smelling and tasting! Small-pox, typhus fever, and measles broke out on the very first trip, and yet over and over again the same ships returned for the living freights, without any attempts at disinfection, or even being cleansed. Hundreds died at sea, and were thrown overboard, and as soon as the living had crept ashore, dozens of dead were found left in the holds of the ships. Soon the beach and sloping cliffs all round the bay were swarming. The aged, the infirm, the sick and the dying lay stretched in the sun, whilst all those who were able first rushed to the sea, and, stripping naked,

plunged in to cleanse themselves from the pollution of the voyage, and then busied themselves in trying to make matters more comfortable. The women washed their filthy clothes, and still more filthy children, and the men, hastily putting their light waggons together and yoking in the camels, repaired to the mills on the great lake and bought up all the flour. Others were making rough stoves, collecting and sorting luggage, digging graves and burying the numerous dead. All that were capable were busy and helpful, and, if not cheerful or happy, they at least did not murmur nor complain, and there was not the smallest disturbance among them. At this time the rails had been laid, and ballast trains were working throughout the line. On hearing that the greater part of the emigrants would have to go up to Tchernavoda to be re-embarked on the river for places higher up the country, the manager offered to carry as many as possible over the line in the ballast waggons. This offer was gladly accepted by the local authorities, and trains were despatched every day, crowded with these poor creatures. Many of them were so ill they were quite unfit to be moved, but they were equally unfit to remain exposed on the beach, so all were carried away. Many died in the waggons and were thrown out as the train moved along by their friends, now apparently rendered callous by extreme misery. Others were left where they died in the waggons, and were trodden on and crushed by their living comrades.

No ships were ready at Tchernavoda, so again the

poor things had to encamp out in the open, and small-pox and fever, helped by such powerful allies as exposure and want, claimed them by hundreds.

It was now that the most sickening and revolting incident of all the emigration took place. A Levantine Italian, living near the station, had a short time before speculated in about a hundred half-grown pigs, intending to send them up into Hungary as soon as they should have attained their full growth on the scrubby hills around the village.

These pigs soon discovered where the numerous dead had been laid in their shallow graves, and, turning up the fresh soil with their snouts, dragged out the bodies, tore them to pieces, and gorged themselves with their loathsome feast. They soon became grossly fat, and their owner shipped them off for Hungary and Austria, where no doubt they were in turn eaten by man. Since that time I have fully agreed with the Mussulman that the pig is an unclean beast, and quite unfit for human food.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Collecting tithes—A strange start in life—Buying a greyhound—Stamboul—Shopping in the bazaars—Running a-muck—Assassination in Constantinople—A villa at Therapia.

LITTLE by little the Tartars drifted off, some to lonely spots on the Dobrudja, others to forests higher up the country, and in time all that remained alive had shaken down into some sort of new home. The Turkish Government now came to the fore, and actuated by those noble principles of generosity, which consist of taking from Peter to pay Paul, reserving all credit and thanks for themselves, made the old Bulgarian residents support the new-comers through the winter, and when the spring came presented all the heads of families with a pair of oxen to till the ground and seed corn to sow. These last were borrowed by the Government from the villagers, and up to this time it has quite escaped their memory to return them. In a few years these hard-working and enterprising people had quite changed the face of the Dobrudja; the great grass plains were ploughed up, and the entire country converted into a vast field of corn. And this in the face of innumerable obstacles that would have broken the hearts of a less plucky race. The chief of these is the

abominable system adopted by the Government to collect the tithes. The revenue of an entire province is estimated, and then tenders are asked for, and the whole farmed out to the highest bidder, usually a Greek or Armenian in Constantinople. They often pay more than the tithes amount to, but recoup themselves by sub-letting, which is done over and over again. The last tithe-farmer is some well-known rayah merchant in a local town, and as soon as the crops are cut he begins his work. He soon receives a bribe from some village to come and tithe them the first, and so enable them to harvest their corn before it is damaged, and so he and his agents go on from village to village, but never without being urged on by the all-powerful bakshish. Work on as hard as he will, and bribe as hard as the villagers can, all cannot be first, and each year vast quantities of corn are spoilt.

Thanks to there being very little rain during the latter months of summer and early autumn, not so much harm is done to the crops by standing out as would be the case in less-favoured countries, and the corn is more fitted for exposure than ours. The wheat is small-grained, very hard, and does not easily shell out of the ear. It fetches a good price, and goes chiefly to Italy and the south of France, where the flour is highly prized for the manufacture of maccaroni. Until the tithe-farmer has gone over the ground and put his mark on his corn as it stands on the shock, the villager is not allowed to husband it, on pain of having all seized in the granaries. Then, before he carts home his own, he has to secure that of the farmer, thrash it out,

clean it, and take it to the town. Then, and not till then, his crops are his own, to do as he likes with. Another drawback to husbandry is the want of roads. McAdam is a name unknown, and up to this day there is not half a mile of constructed road on all the Dobrudja. Then the want of harbours and piers is much felt, as the villagers have often to drag their corn for days over muddy roads before they can get it to a market. Kustendjie proved a great boon to the new-comers, and, after a good harvest, their corn-laden carts might be seen standing about by hundreds, waiting for their turn to discharge into the magazines or ships.

In spite of all difficulties, the Tartars have prospered, and are now the richest and most business-like of all the various races in Bulgaria.

Since those days I have lived for two years in a Tartar house in a Tartar quarter, and in all my numerous dealings with them have always found them straightforward and honest, and it was with a feeling of regret I quitted such good neighbours.

Just as one of the ships crowded with emigrants dropped its anchor in Kustendjie harbour, a mother gave birth to a small daughter, and one of the women that were near her, thinking there was enough trouble without this addition, took the poor, squalling thing on deck, and quietly chucked it into the sea, not even troubling to look what became of it. As it happened it fell not far from a boat rowed by a Greek, and, more out of curiosity than anything else, he made a grab at it with his boat hook, and succeeded in hooking it through the skin on its ribs. After looking at this

strange catch and finding it was yet alive, he pulled it into the boat, and, withdrawing the hook, leisurely rowed ashore. He thought when he landed that it was dead, but not liking to throw it again into the harbour he took it up by its legs, in the way a keeper carries a rabbit, and marched off to consign it to a dust heap outside the town. As he passed a café where an old Turk was smoking his pipe, the child gave a writhe, and the Turk seeing it called to him to stop, and heard the story. Without saying a word he took the baby, and, carrying it to a door on the opposite side of the street, handed it over to his wife, telling her to see what could be done for it. It only required what is necessary for us all—food and raiment—but the old woman, having nothing to do all the live-long day, threw in a little cuddling and cosseting, and when I was last at Kustendjie it was a sturdy, bright-eyed little five-year-old, calling the Turk and his wife father and mother, and evidently was the pet and tyrant of the household. May it live happily, and end its days better than it began them; and may the old Turk when he dies get a place very near Mahomet, and the kindly old woman become a lovely houri!

As I have before-mentioned, coursing was one of our favourite amusements. It always gave us an object for a ride, and the incidents of the sport were something to talk and think of during the long winter's evenings.

We were always on the look-out for good greyhounds, but, though we went far and wide for them, they were rare to find, and, when found, the owners

either would not sell them, or asked longer prices than we cared to give.

One morning G—— was looking out of his window, when he saw an old Tartar pass the gate leading a beautiful black greyhound. He ran out, and invited the old fellow into the kitchen, and after the usual salaams, coffee and pipe, asked him if he would sell the dog, and to his surprise the Tartar at once answered:

'Yes, gladly, to you; and, though I believe him to be the best dog in Turkey, I shall not ask over-much. The fact is, he is so good, he has gained a reputation which has reached the ears of the Pasha here, and a few days ago I received an order to bring the dog for him to look at. Had I neglected to obey, I should have been accused of some crime and put in prison, and the dog would have been seized to pay for my keep there. If the Pasha sees the dog he will want it, and I dare not ask him a para for it. Now, Tchellaby, if you take the dog the Pasha will be sold, and I shall not return empty-handed. Take the dog out and try him, and I will return here in three hours, when, if you have proved him a good one as I am sure you will, you shall give me 3*l.* for him.' This was agreed to, and mounting our horses we proceeded to a favourable ground, where we soon found two hares, which Sweep (for so we named him) picked up in grand style. This proved by far the best dog we ever had in Turkey, but he was a most unfortunate one, for not only did some brute (I suppose to spite us) once stab him with a knife in three places, which laid him up for a month, but

his ill-luck finished him. One night Jack Striver hearing a noise in his kitchen, thought the robbers had come again, so he crept downstairs with a sword in his hand, and, opening the kitchen door, saw some dark object making for the window. He rushed forward and made a desperate cut, and afterwards, procuring a light, he found poor Sweep dead in the yard with his head cleft open.

Every now and then business, or oftener the necessity of change of air to shake off the ague, took me to Constantinople, and though there is no large town in Europe that affords less occupation or amusement for an Englishman, when once the Asiatic appearance of the place has lost its novelty and attraction for him, yet it was always with a feeling of pleasure that I found myself running up the ever-beautiful Bosphorus, and the annoyance of the custom-house, the useless bother of the passport office, and the fearful smells, did not quite dispel it. I could stumble up the steep hill from Tophanna, midst sleeping dogs and decaying dirt heaps, if not with a light step, with a light heart, and settle myself at the Hotel d'Angleterre, where I always had a hearty welcome from M. and Mdme. Misseri for old acquaintance' sake. I always arrived about seven A.M., and after a bath and general furbishing up, would eat a grand breakfast with a ravenous appetite, sharpened by the rising at daybreak to see the entrance of the Bosphorus, the beauties of which should never be missed, however often one has the chance of seeing them. Then what a pleasure it was to smoke a cigarette

of Misseri's tobacco (which was always quite perfect), and have a talk with some of the English travellers, and in exchange for their budget of home news put them up to some of the ways of the East. Especially pleasant was it when, as often happened, my old friend Captain A—— was there, for, not being engaged in business, and having 'done' Constantinople years ago, he would sit and chat, and tell me in his bright, racy way all the last news and *bons mots* of the West. Then we often made long excursions over the steep hills looking down on the Bosphorus, where we could admire all the wondrous beauties of nature, though one could feel but disgust at the works of man; for, however lovely these shores are from a distance, all disappears on closer inspection wherever man has left his mark. From the Pasha's house on the Bosphorus to the Bostanji's hut on the hill all has been left in an unfinished state, and yet all is in ruins, and is a fitting emblem of a people who are always making grand promises for the future, and, at the same time, well—going astern, with the stoker sitting on the safety valves, and all the fat in the fire!

Captain A—— had travelled all over the world, and had done so with his eyes open, and not only had he picked up a store of useful knowledge, but had collected a quantity of quaint and beautiful nick-nacks. He and I often strolled through Galata—that nest of rogues, over the bridge of boats, crowded with people from nearly every country in the world, and, after resisting the offers of a swarm of Jew interpreters,

whose villanous looks and crafty, lying lips would have fitted a veritable Judas, entered the cool and shady (if smelling) bazaars. Rejecting the old Damascus swords, Circassian daggers, and other 'veritable antiques,' all made within the year at Birmingham, that were thrust upon us, we searched and peered about till we found something worth having, and then, squatting down on the low counter facing the street, would bargain and cheapen, till we often got it for a fraction of what was asked, and when we had done so probably paid three times its value.

On the very first occasion that we visited the bazaars together A—— proposed we should conceal the fact that I could speak Turkish, and engage the services of a young Jew, who really spoke English very well, and see how far he would try to rob us. This we did, and soon settled ourselves down to purchase from an old Turk a very curious and handsome old English clock, by a celebrated maker who had been dead some hundred years. The clock would not go, but it was easy to see there was not much the matter with it. Probably it had been a present from some ambassador or rich merchant to some Pasha, and, after being stopped and broken by the fingers of his inquisitive wives, had perhaps been stolen during some fire, and kept for years till it was safe to expose it for sale. A—— now addressed himself to the Jew interpreter:

'Ask the old fellow how much he will take for the clock?'

Jew in Turkish: 'How much?'

Turk: '12*l.*'

Jew to A——: '16*l.* sare.'

'Offer him 2*l.*'

Jew to Turk: 'The Englishman offers 1*l.*; says it is all smashed up, and only wants it for the glass and hands, the former for an eye-glass and the latter for tooth-picks.'

Turk, with dignity: 'You lying beast. May your vile tongue blister your polluted mouth, and destroy you by slow starvation.'

Jew to A——: 'He say, sare, 'cos he love me all same as him son, he let English lord have clock for 14*l.*' This was a little staggering for me, and my face must have betrayed me to the lynx-eyed Israelite if I had not taken the opportunity and hunted a flea all round the inside of my sock. This kind of bargaining went on for an hour, A—— being made aware of the state of affairs by me, whilst the Jew had gone to fetch us some coffee. At last the Turk was beaten down till he asked 2*l.*, and the Jew said 4*l.*, and then the villain's look of outraged innocence was worth anything when I quietly said to the Turk *in Turkish*—

'We will give you the 2*l.*, and hope to have a deal with you again another day, when we will not bring our friend here with us.'

In a moment the young Jew had disappeared, and the old Turk told us it was an established custom for the Jew touts to put on a good round sum for themselves, which the shop-keepers dare not refuse to hand back to

them after the customer has left, or the whole gang would conspire to drive customers away by some such speech as this: 'Sare, you no stop at dat old man, him three children die yester-night with black fever.'

Twice over, while we were wending our weary way up the steep hill in Galata, it was our luck to see a Turk 'run a-muck.' The first time it was a savage, wild-looking, young priest, who, brandishing a bludgeon round his head, rushed down the hill, hitting out like mad, and scattering the numerous throng right and left into the shops and stores. Having seen him pass from a safe retreat, we could but laugh as we looked after him to see the fat old Greeks and wily Armenians, who, mounted on ponies, were quietly toiling up the hill on their way home from business, mentally engrossed in counting up the day's plunder, suddenly become aware of the approaching ruffian. With looks of horror and cries of dismay they plunged and wriggled out of their saddles, and as often as not their heads touched the ground before their feet; then picking themselves up they made a rush into some shop, and waited till the danger was passed. The second time the performer was a *topjie*, or artilleryman, if possible more fierce-looking and run-amuckish, armed with a short knife; but being in a part of the street where there were no friendly shops to shelter in, and not quite liking to skedaddle, A—— planted himself in the middle of the street, and, taking a favourite old blackthorn by the small end, stood his ground manfully. But could he ever withstand that mad fanatic's

rush? Yes; the mad rush subsided into a walk, and the walk to a halt, and then turning round and muttering a curse, the 'run a-mucker' slunk down a by-street, looking very much like a whipped hound. Nine times out of ten this frenzy is feigned, but not always, as for instance in the case where a priest took to running a-muck on an Austrian's Lloyd's boat in the Black Sea, and, after killing one or two passengers and wounding others, was only stopped by repeated shots from the captain's pistol, which at last laid him dead on the deck.

Murders and assassinations take place every day in Constantinople, chiefly amongst the mongrel Levantines. The perpetrators are hardly ever caught, and I really think it is a good thing they are not, for, like that *higher* creation the brute, by preying on each other they help to reduce the number of vermin, that would otherwise swarm!

One day, whilst walking down the Grand Rue, Captain A—— heard a row behind him, and turning round he saw about a dozen men rush out of a low café, closely followed by two half-bred Greeks with revolvers in their hands, which they were discharging into the backs of their late friends. A—— saw two men fall, and then as the line of fire looked unpleasantly straight for him, he slipped into a shop just in time to miss a bullet that lodged in the door post. The scrimmage was soon over, when on looking out he saw three men were lying dead in the street, and a fourth writhing on the ground like a crushed worm. The murderers

were well known, and it was not the first time they had been 'in difficulties;' but what was the use of troubling about such reptiles? They paid a bakshish in the proper quarter and made themselves scarce for a few days, after which they returned to their old haunts and practices.

Well, it is a den of vice and corruption, and, when I had had enough of it, I was glad to avail myself of the kind invitation of a friend at Therapia to go and spend a few days with him in his pleasant villa perched on the steep banks of the Bosphorus, and enjoy the comforts of a clean English house. Then how delicious to sit in his verandah and let the refreshing breezes, that play continually up or down the straits, soothe and cool you after the suffocating dust-laden air of Pera and Galata, whilst your eyes drink in the exquisite scenery before you, and you think that if only you had so much a year to live on, and some one you know for companion, you could rough it here very well! But, no, you are an Englishman—it is not always scorching August, and you are not always, as now, in need of rest for mind and body. A restless energy will come over you shortly, and you will long for a more active life, be it of pleasure or business; and if you were obliged to live here, even with that companion you are thinking of, you would soon grow discontented and crave for the old life of work and struggle, when each morning you wake up as one of the combatants in the battle of life, and each night knew you had taken your share in the great and never-ending engagement. Jack Striver and

Yorkey George, with the honest soil of labour on their hands, and their rough, uncouth ways, are better companions than these mongrels who are afraid to take their share of the dangers and privations, but hover round the great army to plunder and pillage those more courageous. Let us leave the oily Levantines in their beautifully-situated home, breathing an atmosphere of vice and cunning, and get back to the English navvy, and the Bulgar and Tartar workmen, and, slipping out of trousers into knee-breeches, buckle to again with renewed vigour.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Pelevan Ali, a brigand chief—A ride in search of robbers—Roast beef for dinner—A mare's nest.

I AM sorry to say the cut-throats and robbers are not all left in the cafés and gambling-houses of Pera, but the brigand of the Dobrudja, though a savage ruffian, who should be shot down or hung whenever he can be caught, is yet preferable to the man that slips in a knife between your shoulders as you quit the opera, and then stealing off leaves you in ignorance of who has done it.

For months we had heard of the doings of a certain Pelevan Ali and his gang of twelve men and one woman, and if a fraction of the atrocities laid to their charge were true they richly deserved hanging, especially the woman, who was reported to be a Mussulman, young and very pretty, but a bloodthirsty little 'she-devil.'

While I was away at Constantinople R—— took my place at Tchernavoda, and one day towards the end of the month he received a mysterious message from an old Moldavian, requesting him to come to a quiet spot on the Danube, as he had something important to communicate to him. R—— repaired to the appointed

place, where he met the old man and heard from him the following account: Yesterday afternoon, Tchellaby, my boy was on the hills half a mile behind your house, guarding a drove of bullocks, when suddenly a mounted Turk galloped up and forced him to follow to the big ravine, where he was surrounded by twelve other Turks and a woman. They threatened to cut his tongue out if he did not tell them all they wanted to know, and then asked him these questions:

'When do the English pay the workmen?'

'The day after to-morrow.'

'When is the money expected from Kustendjie?'

'To-morrow afternoon.'

'Where is it taken when it arrives?'

'To Tchellaby's house.'

'Which is the Tchellaby's house?'

'The first in the row.'

'That is enough; go back to your bullocks, and if you ever mention a word about having seen us, or anything we have said, we will kill you by inches, and will burn down your father's house, and he and his family in it!'

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Did the robbers intend attacking the escort on the road, or to attempt to plunder the house? Anyhow the money was expected in a few hours, so no time was to be lost. Cole-ei was saddled, two mounted cavasses called, and, with pistols in readiness, R—— hastened out to meet the money and escort it back to his house. About twelve miles on the road he met the carriage guarded

by five Zaptiehs, and, warning them to be on the alert, he rode on with them and reached his house without interruption. The strong oak chest that contained the money was then brought in and secured to the floor by large screws through the bottom. Orders were given to an English workman to go to the men's huts at dark and pick out twenty men, well armed, and take up a position in a small ravine a few hundred yards in front of the house. All the Englishmen living in the other cottages were told to keep guard, and then R—— ate his dinner, and with his pistols on the table in front of him, sat and looked out of the window and waited. Time passed slowly and drearily till eleven P.M., when a thunderstorm that had been brewing up from the west burst over the house, and R—— hoped that the robbers might not be such fools as to come marauding, but trusted the men in the ravine might stick to their post. The night was pitchy dark, except when lighted up by the constant flashes, and R—— dared not light a lamp, as the great heat made it necessary to keep the window open, and a light would have made him too good a mark for a pistol to be pleasant. The storm was yet at its height, when a vivid flash came, and Mashallah! there they were! They were seen for a moment, close to the window, a mass of smoking, steaming horsemen, with pistols ready in their hands, and every eye turned direct on R——. The next moment all was darkness, and rushing to the window R—— fired in the direction where he had seen the men. Up rushed the guard, up rushed the Englishmen, but the

phantom-like robbers were nowhere to be found. Doubtless they had seen R—— was in readiness, and not knowing how many were on the look-out for them, and mistrusting their old flint locks, thought discretion the better part of valour and made tracks. There was no sleep though for anyone that night, and R—— felt thankful when all the money had been paid away to the men next morning. The old Moldave and his boy got a good bakshish, and in future the money was always escorted by a double guard, till the happy day arrived when it was brought over in a locomotive.

Day after day we heard of the doings of this gang of robbers. One day here, another there, but never more than a few hours in the same place, and wherever they went they left their mark, till at last they became so notorious that the Pasha of Silistria was aroused, and despatched a strong force of Zaptiehs to look them up. One day our former landlord, Salim Bey, came to the office almost in a hurry (!) to say that, from information received, he believed the whole gang were passing the day in a hollow in the sand hills, between the big lake and the sea, and that if a sufficient force could be sent out all might be taken. Half a dozen of us at once volunteered, and taking with us four of our cavasses and five Zaptiehs, off we set at a hard gallop. On nearing the narrow strip of sand the main body halted, and four of us pushed on close to the sea as fast as we could ride, and took our stand just through the ford on the river that runs from the lake, with orders from our general, Salim Bey, to shoot

anyone that attempted to pass. Not being *paid* to shoot a man, or be shot myself, I confess I did not feel very happy. Doubtless when you are paid it makes all the difference, and the soldier experiences a feeling of pleasure when he bowls over an enemy, and also perhaps when he gets an ounce of lead in his own body; though this requires a strong imagination for a non-combatant to take in. And yet how very strange are some of men's pleasures. Is it not a fact that men of wealth and health, with all the land of the world whereon to disport themselves, voluntarily imprison themselves in a small ship, and, putting out to sea in it, go through that worst of all torture sea-sickness, and all for pleasure? Did not 'Moon-faced Nobby' and 'Ginger Jim' (two navvies) stand in a broiling sun on Saturday afternoon, and hammer each other's faces with their fists till one of them could do it no longer, and all for pleasure? And am not I sitting here with the sun peeling my nose, and expecting to shoot at, or be shot by, some one who I don't know and don't care for, because I like it? I must say I was uncommonly pleased after having indulged in these thoughts for half an hour to see, not the robbers, but my own friends, who had drawn the cover blank.

We rode on to some cottages within sight, where we were told the robbers had passed only half an hour before, so they must have been but just out of sight when we took up our stand at the ford. We scoured the country for miles and only got home just in time for dinner, which I was kindly invited to share

with a friend; I suspect because he dare not face alone the chaff he would get from his wife on our 'wild-goose chase.' 'Do come,' he had said; 'we shall be so glad to see you, and you will get a splendid joint of beef which we received this morning from Constantinople.' After smartening myself up, and telling Mustapha I should not be at home to eat the everlasting leg of baked mutton, I walked across the compound, and met my friend and his wife at the drawing-room door on their way in to dinner. The rich, potent smell that met us in the hall was sufficient to make my mouth water, and I did not need my host's remark, 'Beef, my dear fellow, fine roast beef of old England!' to give me an appetite. But, oh, heavens! what did we behold on entering the room! An empty dish, a dark smear across the table, the floor, and the window-sill, and three or four glasses broken on the ground. In the distance a remarkably fine street dog, dragging something down the dusty road!

I have been left on the wrong side of a cover half an hour before I discovered the V. W. H. were away with their fox. Twice I have missed the last train to town, and had to return to my dear aunt's house for the night knowing 'she can't abide smoking;' and my child was the fifth girl, and I had been longing for a boy. But these were pleasures compared to my feelings on this occasion, and it took all my manhood to prevent crying like a child! It is better I should not say how my host and hostess behaved, and I will only remark that as usual the lady behaved best.

Well, there was nothing for it, so, with a sickening feeling in my heart and a big lump in my throat, I jogged home and fetched the despised baked mutton; and if we drowned care in a glass that evening, had not the provocation been enough to seduce a Sir Wilfrid Lawson from the paths of virtue?

Among the various works of the railroad were to be seen near the harbour, a round lime-kiln, a long iron cylinder, and a corrugated iron magazine, three most useful, and surely most innocent, things, and yet they got us into trouble! Some wiseacre, no doubt, after having indulged in copious libations of the waters of Allicapou, reported to the government at Constantinople 'That the dogs of English were up to their old Indian tricks, and, under the pretence of making a railroad, were ready to seize the whole country. The flower of the British army had arrived, nominally as workmen, and were practised every Saturday afternoon in that British military exercise, "the box." Near the point had been erected a Martello tower of great strength, and commanding the sea for a great distance. Close to this was mounted a monster mortar that could throw a shell for miles, and last of all there was a bomb-proof magazine. Would his excellency cause this intelligence to be conveyed to the Padishah, Defender of the Faithful, who would elevate the horse-tails once more on the Bosphorus, and despatch his invincible soldiers to drive the Giaours into the sea?' etc., etc. Did anyone ever hear such bosh? It was bosh, but it produced a letter from the English Embassy making enquiries (I don't for

a moment insinuate the ambassador believed a word of all this); but we had to return answer confessing to the lime-kiln, the cylinder, which was used to creosote timber in, and the iron magazine. In a few days a Turkish Pasha arrived, and after peeping at the questionable objects for about an hour, and looking as if he thought they might go off at any moment, he came to the office, and, having beaten about the bush for a long time, at last out it came. 'Would Tchellaby explain what the curious round-tower was? Oh, to burn lime in! And the long tube? Oh, to cook timber in! Might he further ask if the big iron magazine would turn a cannon ball?'

'Look here, Pasha, some ass has made game of your big men, and they have sent you here on a fool's errand —come and look for yourself, and I will explain anything you want to know.'

The Pasha was evidently in a state of doubt for some time, but, on seeing a small nail driven through the side of the magazine, he was a little reassured; but do what we would, he could not understand the English workmen. 'If they come here to work on the line, why are they practised in "the box," that severest of all military exercises?' and it was quite useless to say they did it for fun and relaxation after their labours. He was a polite man and could not speak English—if it had been otherwise he would have said 'gammon.'

CHAPTER XXX.

A country residence—Snakes, scorpions, and centipeds—A murder by the brigands—Capture of the gang.

For the protection of the harbour against the high seas engendered by the north-east winds, a mole had to be run out from the extreme point of Kustendjie, and this was constructed of the largest-sized stones that could be transported and tipped roughly into the sea. The nearest place where such stones could be procured in sufficient quantity was at the Black Stork Cliff; so we put in a siding there, and opened a large quarry, and Jack Striver worked it by contract.

It became part of my duty to superintend this work, as well as see to all that was going on at Tchernavoda; and, finding that living on the hills above Tchernavoda greatly added to my labour, I determined to take up my abode half-way between the two works. I therefore selected a spot at the foot of some earth cliffs, and had a good-sized room benched in the face. I roofed it over with fagots, and then a good thickness of earth, and the front, in which there was a door and window, was made of boards. Into the earth-wall at the back of this room I drove a narrow tunnel, which

led round to a small wooden house like those shepherds in England have in their sheep-folds. The only entrance to this was by the tunnel, and, when snug in bed in the wooden hut, I felt pretty secure against robbers should they pay me a visit.

Georgey, who had lately come out of prison and been married, lived in another small hut with his wife and my groom. A two-stalled stable similarly formed completed my establishment. The view from my hut was very pretty, and, after my work was done, I used to enjoy the quiet and freedom from interruption at my country mansion, and for many months I lived here quite happily; though I must say I should not now much relish going back to it, and, if I had the same work to superintend would rather have the long rides to and fro, than face the numerous discomforts of my solitary life, with the constant expectation that Pelevan Ali and Co. might pay me a visit, and bait me in my hole as a terrier does a badger. I prepared myself as well as I could for all emergencies, and not only kept my pistols and gun always ready, but I filled a large can with blasting powder and buried it under the doorstep, with a patent fuse leading into my room. This I did one day when no one was near to see me, and afterwards I told Georgey that I had laid a fearful powder mine and swore him to secrecy, but did not tell him where it was. As I expected, Georgey told everyone in confidence, and I soon became aware that he had done so by the uneasiness of my occasional visitors whilst sitting with me, and their evident dread of

smoking for fear a spark might fire the train and make an end of us all.

Like Martin Chuzzlewit and Mark Tapley at Eden, I was troubled by the small fry that graze on the human, and also by a few of the 'wenomous warmints.' I had had a bad bout of fever one day, and for hours had been in a half-dreamy, half-delirious state, and when I recovered I could not get over the impression that a monster snake had been darting at my eyes from the boughs of a tree. The impression was so strong it made me quite uneasy, and I peered about to see if there might not be a snake coiled up somewhere handy. Feeling very weak I laid down on my divan, and there just over me was the origin of my dream. Coiled up in the fagots that formed the ceiling, with about six inches of head and body hanging down, was a snake four feet long, busily engaged in darting out its quick tongue and fixing all the musquitoes and flies that came near it. I jumped up and got a pistol, intending to shoot it, but on second thoughts changed my mind, thinking it might be amusing to watch my guest and learn a little of snake life. I was glad I did so, for it proved a most diverting companion, and though at first it would hiss and draw back when I approached, it became in time so tame that it would take a live musquito out of my fingers when I held it up to it. Another visitor I did not treat so well. I was at dinner one evening when something caught my eye just on the further edge of the table, and on looking there I saw a fine scorpion earnestly studying the human feeding.

He suffered for his inquisitiveness, for, before he could scuttle off lobster-fashion to his hole in the wall, I whacked him to death with my stick.

'There is one reptile in Bulgaria, Tchellaby, the bite of which will kill a strong man, and that is the centiped. If you get bitten by that and wish to live, you must at once poultice the bite with the excoriated breast of a live chicken.'

I had been told this by more than one Turk, and, if I did not quite believe in the cure, I had a wholesome dread of this hideous reptile. They are not pleasant-looking beasts in England, but very mild compared to a real Turkish one. I have often seen them three inches long, and as thick as my finger, covered all over with hard, red scales, that fit into each other like the shell on a lobster's tail.

'One night I was awoke by a strange burning sensation in my arm just above the elbow, and on putting up my hand felt a wriggle. In a moment I was out of bed and had struck a light, and then saw one of these creatures hanging from my arm, and fanging on like a bull-dog. I didn't scream, and I didn't faint—as there was no one to hear the former, or to pick me up if I indulged in the latter; but I did feel very sick, and it was some moments before I collected presence of mind sufficient to knock the beast off into my water jug, which I did at last, and there it plunged and dived for a little while, and then stretched itself out at the bottom.

Now for the chicken, thought I, but, oh! how am I to get one? The foxes took my last but yesterday,

and there is not one to be had within three miles. I shall be dead long before I can get one. I had better get into bed and think what to do. I have heard that in cases of snake-bite it is well to get drunk on brandy, but it takes two bottles to affect a man's head when the other poison is in his blood, and I haven't got a drop.

Ah! hartshorn is the thing, but the nearest to be had is at Constantinople. Yes, I am poisoned without doubt. How the bite burns, and a drowsiness is creeping over me! Surely my body is beginning to swell, and my last hour is at hand. I wonder if the robbers will come to-night to murder me. If they do they will be sold. I don't suffer; in fact this death is rather pleasant, and that is some comfort . . . . Hullo! Yes. 'Eight o'clock, Tchellaby; breakfast will be ready in twenty minutes.'

How on earth (if I am on the earth) is this? Wasn't I bitten by a centiped in the night, and didn't I die? To be sure I did. I remember all about it. Yes, and there at the bottom of the jug is my murderer; but as Georgey has called me I may as well get up, especially as I feel very hungry. I can settle about my death while I am at breakfast.

Calling at the Quarry one Saturday on my way to Kustendjie, where I always went for Sunday, Jack Striver told me there had been three or four gentlemen hanging all day about the works, who he thought would look very much in their proper place if they were suspended from a tree by their necks. I asked him to send back three or four of his men to sleep in my

stable, and I believe he gave the order, but as it turned out a wet evening they neglected to obey it.

About twelve o'clock at night Georgey was aroused by a lot of ruffians, who said they wanted to speak to me. Georgey said he dare not wake me, as I was such a fearful savage I was sure to shoot him, and if I saw so many men about I should fire the secret mine. 'Whatever is that?' they asked, and Georgey in a confidential whisper explained it to them, and they at once moved off; but just before daybreak they returned, and standing about a hundred yards distant, called and halloed for a quarter of an hour. This time Georgey did not answer, trusting to the dread of the secret mine to keep them from approaching. As soon as it was light he despatched the groom on one of my horses to tell Jack Striver what had happened, and also to say that if he had not ten men to protect him till I returned he should bolt.

The robbers meant mischief, for, finding themselves baulked of their Saturday night's fun, they moved ten miles up the line, and in the middle of Sunday night broke open the doors of the new station at Tchellaby Keui, and murdered the Turk there in charge, literally hacking and chopping him to pieces.

They then dug up the hearth-stone, pulled up some of the flooring, and had a regular search for money, but I do not think they found any. They took the watchman's gun, pistols, and a few other things they found on him, and then decamped.

This outrage broke up my establishment at Black

Stork Quarry, for, on my return on the Monday, I found Georgey had removed all my goods and chattels back to the cottage, and he himself was only waiting to inform me that no wages in the world could induce him, his wife, or the groom, to stay there another night; and as I had just seen the mutilated remains of the poor watchman I felt very much as he did, and was glad to sleep once more near English neighbours. It also broke up the gang of Pelevan Ali, for it stirred up the Silistrian Zaptiehs to fresh exertions, and very soon after they surprised them in a drinking shop and secured them all. I was running up the line one day on a ballast train, when about half-way I saw some men standing on the line, waving their handkerchiefs. We pulled up and found twenty Zaptiehs with the entire gang of robbers, including the woman, all heavily chained. I soon had them put on a waggon, and then I had a talk with them. They were a repulsive set of ruffians, whose faces were enough to hang them. The girl, who had been reported young and beautiful, turned out to be a middle-aged woman as ugly as sin, and as full of chatter as a magpie. I asked which was the captain, and she at once said she was, and not only captain of the gang but the wife! This was polygamy with a vengeance, only the other way. She begged me to intercede for their lives, and said she was sure I would if I only knew how often I had ridden close to where they were concealed, and they had let me pass unharmed. I showed my gratitude for this by giving her a cigarette, and promising to make

enquiries about them. I kept my word in this, and learnt that the gun and pistols of the murdered watchman had been found on some of the gang. I did not trouble myself further, and was glad to hear some months later that they had all been hanged at Constantinople, a fate they richly deserved for having killed several people.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A lack of curiosity—Running over a hay-cart—Cow-catchers—Engine-drivers—Fitters—A sub-contractor's letters—Imaginary troubles.

I CAN remember when a small boy plaguing my elders to take me some half-dozen miles to see a train pass on the then new Great Eastern Railway; and when, induced by my importunities they did so, I enjoyed a sight that all our neighbours were flocking to see, and to this day a vision of the train coming steadily on, and then dashing by in a cloud of dust, is distinct in my mind.

We often used to say while constructing the line, 'Won't the locomotive astonish the Turks when it first begins to run!' At last that day arrived, and, as we went up and down the first few miles whistling loudly, we cast our eyes up to the town above to see the crowds rush out. Twenty or thirty slipshod rayahs came lounging out and a few Turkish children, but not one full-grown Turk, and those we passed hardly looked at the train, and showed no astonishment. After the trains had been running a month I asked my servant Mustapha what he thought of it; he answered: 'Tchellaby, I have not yet seen it; I am a man and don't go running after sights like a child.'

'Man or child, Mustapha, if you don't go and see it to-morrow, by Allah I will make you eat pork! for I won't live with such an unenterprising fool.'

He did go and look next day, and not only that, but afterwards over a cup of coffee at the khan listened to a lecture on steam engines, delivered by a Turk who quite understood them.

'They may be very fine things, Tchellaby, and you English may make them useful, but God defend a Mussulman from having anything to do with them. We don't like devils and their works even if we could catch one, and are quite content with the means of locomotion we now possess. Nothing can equal a horse, and a bullock-cart is enough for anyone.'

'What do you mean about devils?' I asked.

'Why, Tchellaby, is it not a fact, as the lecturer told us, that in England you trap a strong young devil, and shut him up in that great fire-box on wheels, where you induce him to turn a crank connected with the wheels, and pay him for doing so by giving him cold water to allay his tortures?'

I afterwards talked to lots of villagers about this, and found the devil theory had taken deep root; and often I have seen a man stripped, scouring and rubbing at his garments, because a drop of water from a passing locomotive had fallen on them, which he believed to have been produced by the devil spitting.

Slowness in all they do is so ingrained in the Turk that it was a long time before he could be made to believe in the speed of a train, and often I have seen

one jump from a waggon that was going twenty or thirty miles an hour, because he wanted to speak to a friend, or to pick up a pipe or a stick that he had dropped. Then they could never understand a train when running fast not being able to stop within a yard or two if required, and with one only a hundred yards distant they would drive a flock of sheep or a herd of bullocks across the line, and be vastly indignant at the slaughter produced amongst them.

I was once going down the line on a loose engine, and on rounding a sharp curve in a cutting, saw an old Turk about two hundred yards in front of us sitting on the top of a load of hay, with the hind wheels of his araba still on the rails. He did not get the least flurried, but slowly held up his hand for us to stop. In a moment crash we came into his araba, smashing it all to bits and rolling the two bullocks over. The Turk spread out his arms and went flying yards, but happily lighted head foremost on a lot of his dispersed hay.

On going back to see what damage was done, the old fellow said in a great rage, 'Why did you not stop? I held up my hand, so, and you saw me I know, for you at once began turning round that thing' (the break), 'no doubt to go faster and do all the mischief you could. Oh, you vile dogs! I have defiled all you consider most dear and sacred.'

Poor old fellow, we did not resent his harmless vituperations, for if he mentally defiled the goods, alive and dead, of the Giaour, we on our part had

smashed his araba, and there a mile away jogged his two bullocks with the yoke dangling between them.

Before running the trains we fenced in all the line with strong posts and rails, but this timber proved too great a temptation to the villagers, and they stole it all during the first winter. Over and over again we called on the authorities to protect our property, but they contented themselves as usual with fair words and promises, and so to recoup ourselves we refused to pay for any of the numerous beasts that were killed, and protected the engines with American cow-catchers, or, as they might be more appropriately called, *cow-smashers*, for they nearly always killed all they hit. In one place our line came round a curve, out of a deep cutting on to a bank which crossed a morass, and afforded a tempting short cut to the town of Medjideer from the other side. Often we met men riding here, and to avoid being run over they had to flounder into the bog, where their horses often remained for hours before they could be dragged out. One day I was on the engine when, on rounding this curve, we came upon a large flock of sheep being quietly driven along. Their fate was inevitable, and the shepherd only just saved himself by plunging into the marsh. Seventy sheep were cut to pieces and others more or less hurt. I shall never forget the awful appearance the engine presented after this exploit. From the rails to the top of the funnel it was one mass of gore, and though I bobbed behind the firebox I was not much better, and it made me feel sick to feel the hot blood bespattering my face and hands.

For weeks the stench on this bank was disgusting, and more than once the breaks were all put on and the train stopped, the drivers mistaking the flocks of vultures that collected on the rails for more sheep. These birds became so fat and gorged that they could hardly fly, and we amused ourselves by pelting them with bits of coal from the tenders.

We treated the buffaloes with most respect, for, though the cow-catchers converted them into beef nine times out of ten, on the tenth they kicked us off the rails, and I have often had to spend all the night in a pestilential marsh, screw-jacking an engine back to the rails, with the smell of a smashed beast in place of a dinner.

Now that I am on the engine let me say a few words about my companions the driver and stoker, or rather of the former, for the stoker, if he keeps steady, attentive, and sober for a few years longer, will develop into a driver; so in giving my opinion of his *chef* I include him. I have had some experience of English workmen, from the farm-labourer to the enlightened mechanic, but as a class I prefer the engine-driver to all others. In the first place he must be good at his work, and to be so he must be a steady, sober man—collected in danger, observant, and ever watchful, and yet with dash enough about him to get out of a difficulty when a bold stroke is the only thing that will save him. He works long hours, and all the time the safety of the train and the lives of his passengers greatly depend on him, and yet he has to face fearful exposure, and whilst

his body is nearly numb from the driving snow-storm, or roasted by the sun, his mind must not flag for a moment. If you have the *entrée* to that most private spot, the foot-board of a locomotive, you will find him civil, and he will show you numerous little attentions—such as wiping the dust from the top of his tool chest for you to sit on, sprinkling the floor with water to keep down the dust, and offering you a pull at his tea-kettle that always stands on the shelf over the furnace door. No conversation is to be expected from him, for he can't afford to have his attention diverted from his work. He is man at the wheel and captain all in one, and while chattering might wreck his ship against another, or let his fires get low and so be behind time.

The engine-driver nearly always rises from the ranks and works his way up through the various grades, beginning as a labourer in the locomotive shops, and promoted for his merits and intelligence to be first a cleaner, then a stoker. This is as it should be, for though I have often seen fitters put on as drivers, they never make such good men. The fact is they are such gentlemanlike, enlightened dogs, they are always thinking more of their own importance, the rights of labour and the oppression of capital, than they are of their work, and are more inclined for a grumble with anyone they can victimise with their grievances (and where is there a fitter without one?), than keep a look-out in the face of a blinding storm. They are so used to work to a bell that they are aggrieved if they are detained on the

road a few minutes, and if an accident should occur, they do the suffering martyr to perfection!

Yes, I am prejudiced, and so would you be, if you had been told, as I have, whilst lying working under an engine with the leading wheels off the rails, that I hurt the feelings of one of these gentlemen because I asked him to lift up and hand me a pick. 'You will kindly excuse my remarking, sir, that there are different branches of labour, and as it is fitting that the lawyer should leave the surgeon's lancet alone, so is it that I, a fitter, should not degrade my profession by touching a navvy's pick. If I touched that tool I should sacrifice what I consider one of the noblest gifts God has given me—my self-respect,' &c., &c. Then I may be prejudiced, but I did not quite relish getting a 'round-robin' from a lot of fitters asking to be allowed to go to work an hour later in the morning, for, 'as you are doubtless aware, the stomach revolts at a cold collation so early in the morning!' In my opinion there is no class of workmen who do so little real work as the fitter, and certainly none who talk and swagger so much about their own value. They would be a dangerous class of men were it not for the safety valve the pen affords them. They are for ever hatching a grievance and stating it to their master (I beg their pardon, their employer!) in 'round-robins,' the elegant and eloquent language of which so gratifies their vanity, that they become good-tempered, and 'the grievance' is forgotten. I am unable to give one of these productions, having burned them all; but the quaint and pithy

language of one I received from a sub-contractor so struck me that I preserved it, and am tempted to give it here, as I fancy it may amuse my readers as much as it did me.

The grievance he complains of is this:—He had lately moved from Kustendjie to a distance up the line, and, finding he required a crane to lift some big stones, he wrote to me stating his wants. Not having a crane to spare, and being greatly annoyed by a young jackass that he had left near my office, which spent its time braying for its lost master, I had the beast put in a waggon and sent to him. The return train brought the following, which I give verbatim, the original being still in my possession:—

'Dear Sir,—How can I anticipate your implicity any longer? I ask for a crane and you send me a donkey. Hoping that future thoughts and future foresights may remedy our evil, and let extempore go, I remain, yours obediently.'

Some years afterwards, whilst the same man was engaged on a contract which the Turkish authorities had stopped, he wrote to me again, and I here give the concluding portion of his letter:—

'At present I am losing valuable time and furthermore am deterred from other employment elsewhere, which is a great pecuniary loss to self and co. Now having so patiently abided every obstacle put in my way by Turkish Government, of which I believe were the dictators of my suspension, I wish to bear in mind that I desire my expenses allowed for delay. I hereby

anxiously await your best approval and solicitations from the offspring of my suspension as it is getting unbearable under the prolonged unsatisfactory proceedings. Hereby again pressing for some implicit decisive measure as to my future interest, trusting with confidence and past friendship that you may be able to fathom some conciliatory speedy measure.—Sir, I remain, &c.'

It is astonishing what a vent some people find for their outraged feelings in pen, ink, and paper. I often saw this exemplified at the hotel we built at Kustendjie. Owing to the steamers from Constantinople being so often late, we made an arrangement by which they were due the evening before the boat started up the Danube, and thus gave them twelve hours' law. If they got in at proper time the passengers were furious at being delayed, and it was useless to tell them it was better so, than risking missing the river boat, and being detained three days. Some few took it resignedly, but these kept to themselves all the evening, and there was no making friends with them. The mass (I am speaking of Britishers) called in a threatening manner for pens and paper, and often three or four were stating their grievances in letters to 'The Times' at the same moment.

They stalked off to their rooms looking the British lion, male and female, all over, but after scribbling for an hour would come sauntering downstairs with beaming, benevolent countenances, intent on making friends with all they met, and would laugh and chat through he *table d'hôte*, and all the evening afterwards, and

always finished before retiring for the night by burning their letters, and expressing regret that they were not going to stay longer!

Now and then we met with that not very rare specimen, 'the book maker,' and he or she, as the case might be, always took these delays well. The fact is their valves were always open, and they blew off so much steam every day, they kept it well under command. It was always a great pleasure to me to meet these British travellers and study their various characters, and, as far as I could, picture to myself what sort of people they really were. Many of them proved most amusing and agreeable acquaintances, and I spent many a pleasant evening in their society. I noticed, however, a peculiar fact—all those who were travelling for business were happy and light-hearted, and most of those whose sole object in roaming about was pleasure were oppressed, and often borne down with cares, and I have seen happier faces at a workhouse-door than many of these carried. Another curious fact was, that the richer most of them were the more miserable they looked, and the more fussy and particular they appeared about the smaller items in their bills, and spent most of their time asking the initiated the relative value of foreign money.

The Turks have a theory—and I don't say it is wrong—that when the world was made, so much of everything was put in it, so much pain, so much pleasure, so much hatred, so much friendship, and the reason you or I have less of any of these is that others are monopolising more than their share. There must

be something of this sort at work, or how is it that people with everything in their favour manage to be so miserable? I can put my hand at this moment on an English gentleman who should be happy if anyone is. He is middle-aged, healthy, very rich, has large estates, a satisfactory family, a pretty and agreeable wife, a stable full of horses, and hounds near. Yet he is miserable at getting old, fancies himself ill, dreads being robbed; his estates worry him in spite of his having an agent who does not take commissions; he has quarrelled with most of his family, bullies his wife, daren't ride or drive his horses, and begrudges the noble fox a few hens. I have studied him carefully, and I believe the only thing he takes any real pleasure in is a pet monkey. When that is playing about the room his face brightens up, and he will now and then give a low, satisfied chuckle, and, if you wish to have a pleasant *tête-à-tête* dinner with him, start him on his wonderful little monkey, and he will go on all the evening unless some of the above worries intrude themselves upon him. Poor fellow! Perhaps he is no more to blame for this than I am because I am bald, and you, my friend, have thatch enough for three; and perhaps there is some fortunate fellow without a shilling in land or stocks, the gout in his toe, a rip of a son, an invalid wife with a sour temper, no horses, but a passion for fox-hounds, that has yet bagged more than his share of happiness, and wherever he goes is bubbling over with joy and contentment. I, for one, would rather be the latter than the former!

CHAPTER XXXII.

A haunted house—Bashi-Bazouks—A Perote swell.

I MENTIONED in a previous chapter that at the commencement of the Crimean War a large number of French soldiers had been left lying dead in a government magazine at Kustendjie. We often wondered where these poor fellows had found a last resting-place, and made enquiries amongst the old inhabitants, but no one could tell us. Some time after the line was opened, and a great many houses had been built, a gentleman connected with the line determined to construct a cellar in his courtyard. He had hardly sunk down three feet below the surface before he came on a mass of these dead soldiers, who were easily identified by their uniforms and buttons. A large quantity of lime was thrown into the open grave and then was all covered over again; and, as no ill has arisen to the living from their close proximity to the dead, I trust they may now remain undisturbed till the day when they rise to take their places at the last great muster. The gentleman to whom this house belonged was called away to England for the winter, and R——, a friend, and myself gladly accepted his offer to take up our

abode there to keep the house aired, and look after the furniture, &c.

It was the beginning of winter when we moved in, and, with two men as servants, soon made ourselves comfortable. Now these two men were married, and had their wives living in the town, so they went home every night, and we took it in turns to lock up the doors and make all secure after they were gone. There was a square hall in the centre of the house, with a wide passage leading to the front door, and on the opposite side a narrower one leading to the offices which were built round the courtyard, under which lay the poor Frenchmen. The hall and passages were paved with Broseley's tiles, and had no matting or carpet over them, and the sound of a step crossing the hall resounded throughout the house. One night, shortly before Christmas, we had gone to bed about eleven o'clock, and I was just going to sleep when I distinctly heard a man's footstep marching at a steady pace from the kitchen across the hall to the front door. Then I heard the clanging of chains, the withdrawing and turning of bolts, and the opening and shutting of the door. I was somewhat astonished at this, but supposed it must be one of my companions who had got up for something. Feeling a little curious about it, I got up, and, lighting a candle, proceeded to their rooms, and then I was indeed startled, for there they both were, and each greeted me with 'What on earth are you stalking about the house for? We heard you go out of the front door?' I assured them I was but

then out of bed, and had got up because I too had heard some one cross the hall, and go out of the front door. Down we went at once, but could make nothing out; all remained as we had left it, and the doors securely fastened. We talked the affair over next morning, and each gave his word of honour he knew nothing further than that he had distinctly heard a man pass through the house in heavy nailed boots, apparently with no desire of concealing the noise he made. For some nights nothing more was heard of our nocturnal visitor, and we thought we had made all secure by locking both the front door and that opening into the passage, and taking the keys upstairs with us. We had almost forgotten the affair, when one night we were all aroused from our sleep by the same tramp, tramp, tramp! the unlocking and then the shutting of the front door. We were out of bed and downstairs in a moment, but again we were at fault. The doors were locked and the keys in our bedrooms. Here was a strange mystery, and from this time it got worse and worse. Every night the same noise was heard, sometimes earlier, sometimes later, but though we went to bed at all sorts of hours it never happened till we had been upstairs some time. Our friend volunteered to sit up in the dark on the stairs to keep watch, and this he did over and over again; but whenever he was on guard our unwelcome visitor kept away, but returned the very first night we were all safe in bed. Night after night we all rushed from our rooms to the hall at the sound of the step, but we never

heard or saw a thing after we had opened our bedroom doors. We had the locks taken off and fresh ones put on, and even nailed a piece of tape across the crack of the door, but it was all the same; the man marched through the house, the door opened and shut, and then all was quiet! We held long consultations on the subject, and finally settled that as nothing was disturbed, and the worst that happened was our rest being broken, we would give up attempting to find out what it was, vote our visitor a respectable ghost, and name him the French corporal, relieving guard in the world of spirits. We soon got so accustomed to 'the corporal' that we ceased to talk or think much about him, and I should have been quite sorry at last if he had come to my bedside one night, made his salute, and informed me his general had ordered him home to France. His visits were quite regular, and continued to be so after my two comrades left me alone in the house; but I have been informed that he has never been heard by any of my successors, and so hope he has retired on a good pension.

I am not superstitious and do not believe in ghosts, but if this was not a French corporal, may I ask my reader who he was? I have often puzzled over the matter, but am as much in the dark as ever, and should be most grateful to any spirit who would drop in on me some winter's evening and clear up the mystery.

If the spirits of the departed French soldiers gave us little trouble, it was far otherwise with their living Mussulman fellow-craftsmen. It fell to my lot to

have to arrange for the transit of about a thousand Bashi-bazouks over the line. They came up from Constantinople in government transports, and were no sooner out of the ships than they dispersed all over the town, and robbed and insulted every creature they met. If any other troops in Europe had behaved half as badly in a conquered enemy's country as these animals did at home, they would have been hanged by scores. To protect ourselves we had to stop the works, and lock and guard every warehouse and magazine; and we worked with a will to get the trains in readiness to send them off. But when the trains were drawn up ready to start, these free-and-easy heroes preferred stopping an hour longer where they were, and on being told by their colonel to put the baggage on the waggons, answered, 'that he might do it himself.' They also volunteered the information that 'he was the son of a dog, that he was defiled, and had better eat dirt,' and, from the easy way he pocketed these insults, I should say he was used to indulge in this cheap and easily-procured diet. These Bashi-bazouks were, most of them, small, dark men, dressed in a dingy-brown, ragged uniform, and armed with old flint-locks, swords and pistols, according to fancy. They drifted about just as they liked, and the last thing they thought of was obeying their officers. When half-way down the line we passed a brook, and at once we on the engine were assailed with oaths and abuse, and ordered to stop, that they might drink, and, because we did not do so at once, a pistol ball was sent whizzing over our ears

to read us a lesson in obedience. If the galleys and hulks of all Europe were searched, and a thousand of the worst characters picked out from among them, they would be orderly, reasonable beings in comparison to these creatures; and not only are they ruffians in time of peace, but are worse than useless when called on to fight. They are too bumptious to be drilled, and, never having obeyed an order in their lives, do not see fit to begin when told to fight; so scamper away at the first shot, and amuse themselves in the rear by murdering women and children, and destroying the property of friends and foes alike.

The villagers of Tchernavoda had reason to dread them, for during the time the regular Turkish troops were gallantly defending Silistria, five hundred Bashi-bazouks kept their precious bodies safe out of harm's way in this valley, and improved the leisure hour by utterly destroying several hundred acres of vineyard, and cutting down about a thousand mulberry trees, on the leaves of which every householder fed swarms of silkworms. I am glad to say that about a hundred Russian Cossacks slipped down on these gentlemen during the night, and, as they despised the useless military practice of setting a guard, they were taken by surprise and nearly all killed.

As soon as the news spread through Tchernavoda that our trains were bringing down a thousand of their old tormentors, the whole of the inhabitants, Mussulman and Christian, packed up their goods and slipped

over the hills to their friends at the next village, and did not return till the last of these fellows had been shipped off.

On their way up the Danube they forced the captains to stop the steamers opposite all the vineyards they saw on the banks, and then going ashore pillaged all they could carry away. On returning from one of these little pleasure trips they crowded so many into a boat that it was upset, and twenty of them went to the bottom and were drowned; and really if the others had followed them it would have been a good thing for their master the Padishah.

Another most troublesome class of passenger that found its way to our line was the swell young Perote, a creature that thought himself the finest of created beings, and who, never having been to any sort of school, retained the conceit and bumptiousness that an English lad soon leaves there.

They are young men at sixteen, and young asses at five-and-twenty, whose only object in life is to make a fortune by any short cut that saves labour, and think it a cute thing to break all the ten commandments, so long as they keep the eleventh and don't get found out.

Before the line was opened for passengers these young swells were constantly arriving from Constantinople, and demanding a pass over the line on a goods' train. As they invariably sneered at everything, grumbled at delays, and never thought of saying a

'thank you,' we were not often inclined to grant one. They generally introduced their request by assuring us they had brought many salaams from some big Pasha who would do anything for them, and had asked them to report on the progress of the railway. Then their brother often dined with the English ambassador, and they themselves were intimate with two or three British consuls. Finding this had no effect, they would ring the changes between flattery and bluster, till they were cut short by the black cavass that guarded the office. One of these youths, not content with an extra amount of importunity and insolence when refused, took up his stand on the works, and, perceiving a train about to start, clambered up into a waggon. I was going forward to get on the engine when I caught sight of him, and stopped to tell him he must get down. He refused, and at the same time cautioned me that he was a Prussian subject, and that he would bring an action against me if I or any of my men touched him. I spoke a few words to the driver and then took my place in the waggon with the would-be traveller, who proceeded to make himself comfortable by pulling off a remarkably smart, tight pair of patent leather boots, and thereby exposing some very dirty white stockings. All went well till we were about five miles out on the plains, when the train slackened speed till it was nearly at a standstill; I then snatched up the boots and threw them as far as I could behind us. Out tumbled my friend to pick them up, swearing like a

trooper, and at the same instant on went the train, and I could see him from a mile off struggling manfully to get his boots on. I did not see him again to enquire, but I hope he enjoyed his walk back down the line, and I am sure he must have learnt a lesson by his trip.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The silk tithes—An inundation—Bursting of the embankment.

I MENTIONED a few pages back that the villagers on the Danube cultivated the silkworm. They did this with considerable profit to themselves, and the tax thereon brought in a good sum to the government, and with proper management this branch of industry might be greatly increased. The mulberry tree grows well in all the valleys, but there being no punishment by law for the wanton destruction of forest trees, and timber of any size being valuable in the plains, they are sure to be hacked down by the first araba driver who happens to break his pole near them, even if they are not destroyed wholesale out of spite, as they were at Tchernavoda by the Bashi-bazouks.

The produce of the silkworm is tithed in the same manner as the corn, that is to say, by farming it out to the highest bidder. One year an enterprising Frenchman called on the Pasha of Silistria, and made him a bid for this tithe, but as he offered just ten per cent. more than had been taken on any previous years, the clever old Pasha thought there must be a miraculous crop, and at once demanded fifty per cent. more. The

Frenchman dropped the subject, and, after a little further chat on things in general, went away. 'Never mind,' thought the Pasha, 'he will come again before long.' But as a week passed and he did not appear, the Pasha getting anxious sent for him, and after bantering him on his want of business energy, asked what he was now ready to give. At once the Frenchman named just half the previous sum. Of course the Pasha scoffed at this, but as the Frenchman would not offer a higher price, and put on a look of indifference, the subject was again allowed to drop. 'Ah, sly dog! he intends having it at his own price. How much better it is to have dealings with rayahs, for then by bringing some accusation against them one can put on the screw, and greatly facilitate matters. Never mind, procrastination is the soul of business, and the harvest is not garnered as soon as it is sown.' This time a fortnight elapsed, when the Frenchman, with every appearance of prosperity and happiness about him, called on his 'best of friends' the Pasha to say good-bye. 'Only a ruse; now comes the tug of war,' and as affairs were getting serious, an hour was wasted over the Pasha's coffee and pipes, till at last, when the Frenchman made a move to go, the Pasha said, 'Well, my friend, are you now willing to give my price for the silk?'

'No, Pasha, I cannot now give you one piastre for it.'

'What! how is this? have you given up the business?'

'On the contrary, Pasha, I am going in for it stronger than ever, and cross the Danube this afternoon to commence buying in Wallachia.'

'Why not buy of me, Monsieur?'

'Because I don't think you have any to sell. I have a shrewd suspicion that every ounce has been smuggled across the river, and I must look sharp and see if I cannot pick it up there. Good-bye, Pasha; I hope to see you at some future time.'

Enquiries were made, and the Frenchman's suppositions proved correct, and the Pasha had to do without his money for that year.

I said in a former chapter that the level of the Danube when at its highest was above that of the valley up which our line ran from Tchernavoda, and that, previous to our commencing the works, the river flooded it each spring for a distance of sixteen miles, and, when it subsided, left a chain of shallow lakes and marshes behind it. Before any other work was done, an earth-dam had been thrown across the mouth of the valley to shut out these floods, and from time to time this dam had been raised and strengthened, till we felt quite secure, and the 'oldest inhabitant' assured us we had made it far higher than the river ever rose. Now nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand the information derived from the 'oldest inhabitant' is erroneous, and to our cost we found it so in this instance. The first winter after the line had been opened had been a very severe one, the ice on the Danube had accumulated to a great thickness, and

throughout the entire length of the river the lands which drained into it were covered to a great depth with snow. As is usual in Turkey, old Father Winter, after showing great vigour during his entire life, took to dying in a hurry. Suddenly the gutters began to run to the ditches, the ditches to the rivulets, the rivulets to the brooks, the brooks to the streams, and these for hundreds of miles above us rushed tumbling and boiling to the great drain of eastern Europe, and then, bursting up the ice-bound surface, went galloping on with resistless force towards its goal, the endless ocean.

For some days I had watched the break-up, and though I believed I had nothing to fear, I yet could not shake off the feeling that a bad time was before us, and I could not rest or feel at ease when out of sight of the great river. First the ice began to burst up with a noise like the discharge of big guns, then patches of water showed above the ice, then the ice itself slowly began to move and break up into great floating masses, and the waters hour by hour crept higher and higher up the banks. The great flat island opposite was soon flooded as far as one could see, but as yet our bank of the river was some feet above the water, so, taking a last look to be sure all was safe, I turned into bed one night about eleven o'clock and was soon asleep. However I was awakened by a tap at my window before daylight, and on jumping up and opening it I was told by a Bulgar watchman that Touna (Danube) was very angry, and had risen to the foot of the bank. In five

minutes I was dressed and making my way through driving rain and pitchy darkness to the river bank, and there I found what the watchman told me was indeed correct. With the help of his lantern we examined some sticks he had placed in the water at the foot of the bank, and I was anything but reassured by his saying that it had risen two inches since he had left to call me. When the first light of dawn peeped over the hills, I had three hundred workmen all ready with barrows, picks, and shovels, and it was well I had, for on running along the bank I found that the water was leaking through at the bottom in a hundred places. Soon planks were laid across the ditch on the inside, and all the men hard at work wheeling earth and casting it down the river face. By breakfast-time we had the satisfaction of seeing that the drain through the bank was almost stopped, and also that the river had ceased to rise. We worked away all day, and when we knocked off at sunset the bank was strengthened greatly and also raised a foot, and as the Danube had only risen six inches in the last fifteen hours we felt pretty safe. I returned to my cottage for the first time, changed my wet clothes, and had just finished my dinner, when a man rushed in to say the river was rising rapidly, and the dam leaking all over. I was quickly on the bank again and found things looking very ugly. The river had risen a foot in an hour and was creeping on fast, and from end to end the bank was leaking like a sieve. It was too dark to wheel barrows of earth up the planks, so I despatched the men in a body to the stables on the works

and made them bring great armsful of long manure. This we spread all along the face of the bank, and the water percolating through soon carried it into the holes and stopped them in a measure. All night we worked, and as soon as it was daylight three hundred fresh men arrived from the Black Stork Quarry, and took the place of the now quite exhausted gang, who had been at work with hardly any time to get a mouthful of food for twenty-four hours, in a pelting rain. I had sent word over to Kustendjie the previous day to inform my chiefs of the state of affairs, and early this morning G—— arrived, and, approving all we had done, helped us throughout the day. Inch by inch crept on the resistless water like a dreadful nightmare, and no sooner had we succeeded in stopping it in one place than it began to make way in another, and over and over again we felt sure we were beaten, and that nothing could stop the water breaking through. At one time a hole a foot wide burst through the bottom of the bank, and increased in size every minute. Manure, stones, and sods were thrown in, only to be vomited out on the other side, and all seemed over, when a bright idea struck us. We sent for a large tarpaulin, and, shoving it out on the water over the hole, and then throwing stones on the far end, sunk it, till the suck of the water carried it over the mouth of the hole, and now for a while we were once more safe.

Thus we struggled on all day, now venturing to hope, now driven to despair, till just before sunset the waters began to subside. Yes, it was certainly gone

down a quarter of an inch, and we are safe! Thus we were congratulating ourselves, when a loud shout made us turn to see a breach in the wall a few yards beyond us, some ten feet wide, through which the river was pouring and tearing with hopeless fury. Our labour had all been in vain, for nothing could stop the gap, and we had only to lay down our tools and give in. G—— and I stood and watched for an hour, by which time the breach was fifty yards wide, and a broad stream went dancing away inland.

The merchant, if he has been honest and has nothing to be ashamed of, quite welcomes bankruptcy at last, after having fought and struggled against it for months; and something of this feeling I experienced as I dragged my tired limbs home to my cottage, and after a good dinner threw myself on my bed, to enjoy the rest I so greatly needed.

On going to the works the first thing in the morning we were overjoyed to find the Danube had fallen so much that the water no longer flowed up the valley, and on riding up the line we discovered that, though it had been damaged in a few places, we should be able to keep it open and at work by putting in a few divergences, and this at small cost. Our labour had not therefore been useless. Had the water broken through twelve hours earlier, the traffic of the line must have been stopped for the summer, and the loss to the company would have been very great.

The sudden rise of the river at Tchernavoda had been caused by a jam of ice just below, which had

dammed up the water, and as this jam had given way at about the same time as our bank the water soon went down.

Since then a strong stone wall has been built along the face of the bank, and the bank itself raised to what the 'oldest inhabitant' thinks an absurd and unnecessary height.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A visit to a Greek church—Sturgeon—Commissions—Buffle de Dieu.

'FATHER VLATT,' I asked one day, 'what time is service in the Greek church at Inji Keui?'

'Service, Tchellaby? Oh, in the morning. This is Sunday, Tchellaby, and if you ride off at once you will be in time for church; and, should the priest have begun before you get there, just stop him and tell him to begin again; he will do it for a glass of raki.'

'Well, this is delightful; I have known a country parson in England who never began service till the squire arrived, but to "whip off and run a foiled scent" for a stranger is quite new, so I will be off at once.'

A gallop of a quarter of an hour brought me to the door of the church—a good-sized, well-built, stone edifice, in the shape of a barn, with the whitest of walls and reddest of tiles; but the door was shut, and if service was going on, it was a Quaker one, for all was silent within. At last I saw an old Moldave and enquired of him.

'Here, father, I want to know about your church; when does the service begin?'

'In the morning, Effendi.'

'This is the morning. I hope it is not over?'

'No, Effendi, it is not begun yet.'

'When will it begin?'

'Ah, who knows!' with a shrug of his shoulders.

'Why, *you* should, you old sinner! I am afraid you don't go to church regularly.'

'Effendi, I am a very good man and quite pious; see, I am hung all over with charms against the evil eye which the priest sells me, but I don't often go to church—how can I when there is no service?'

'You have no resident priest perhaps?'

'Oh, yes, Effendi, we have, an excellent worthy creature! such a good man, Effendi, that every one from far and near comes to buy wax-candles and charms from him, and each week he makes a lot of money, which enables him to get so drunk on Saturday night that he is like a dead man all Sunday. He is now lying among the nettles at the back of the drinking shop there, and will not be able to move till night.'

'Does he often do this?' I asked.

'Well, Effendi, I can't exactly say how often, but this is the fifth Sunday he has spent among the nettles!'

I gave the old fellow a cigarette and, declining a glass of raki he offered me, wended my way home, meditating on the enormous blessing it would be if we of the Western Church could amalgamate with the Eastern Christian Church!

I arrived back at Tchernavoda just in time to see a royal sturgeon hauled out of the Danube. It had been caught in the way usually adopted there—that is, by

dropping down a stout line, covered from end to end with large, sharp hooks, by the side of some pile or angle of a pier standing out into the river. All the winter the sturgeon remain dormant, buried deep in the mud and as soon as the water is warm enough they come out, caked all over with slime and filth, to get rid of which they wriggle and rub against the piles. Now and then one of the hooks gets fast, and if in a sufficiently tough part the fish is easily secured, as they are dull and faint after their long snooze. This one proved a famous fellow, quite seven feet long, and as fat and plump as a pig. It is the roe of this fish that makes the celebrated caviare; but those who have not eaten it when fresh taken from the fish can have no idea what a delicious thing it is, and those who *have* once tasted it are sure to plague any friend they may have near the Danube to procure them more.

I was a perfect martyr to my friends, and if I had executed one half of the commissions that were sent me I should have had my time fully occupied. It was not only commissions for this delicacy that I received, but nearly every mail brought a letter, sometimes from friends, and at others from people I had never heard of, asking me to procure the most impossible things, which they always wanted immediately, and never sending the money wherewith to buy them. Turkish beads, otto of rose, otto of jasmine, Trebizond bracelets and belts, Circassian knives and Broussa silk we sent home wholesale, as they were easily procured by anyone willing to pay for them, but some of the other things required

were posers. A fair dame with limited means, but a passion for 'convertible property,' wrote to me to say that she had seen a notice in some provincial paper that, owing to the general hard-upishness of the Turks, the big Pasha's wives were selling their diamonds cheap!

'Now, do look out, like a dear, kind creature, and if you see any really good stones of the first water going cheap, pick me up a few. Charlotte Amelia is now fifteen, and will be coming out in no time, and no one knows better than you what a help a few good diamonds are to a girl; and by having the settings altered they will do for the younger ones as the elder marry off, and in the end often sell at a profit.'

[N.B. Charlotte Amelia is married, and so are her sisters, or I should not be such a traitor as to mention this.]

I replied that nothing would give me such pleasure as executing her commission, but as I was suffering from a bad attack of the complaint called impecuniosity, then raging in the East, it might be as well if she placed about ten thousand pounds at Hanson's bank at Constantinople for me to draw on. I have never had another of her sweet letters, calling me a 'kind, dear creature!'

Another time a little, fat, old German baron, whose acquaintance I had made one evening at *table d'hôte*, wrote to ask if I would purchase for him a Circassian girl. He gave a most minute description of the article he required. She was to be tall, but not too slender, with a clear complexion, perfect features, glossy black

hair, small feet and hands. Age between sixteen and eighteen. Amiable disposition, and a monstrous power of loving. Her breath must be as the flowers of spring, and her voice must ripple forth from ruby lips as water from a crystal fountain, etc. Her religious convictions might be anything, and her price was no consequence. I could draw on Giltgelt and Co., Vienna, for all the money I might require, and the lovely creature might be sent off, carefully veiled, directed to Baron ——, per Royal Imperial Privileged Danube Steam Navigation Co., at my earliest convenience.

I looked out for this piece of merchandise for years, but could not find the exact article; and, as I was a bachelor in those days, I rather think I should have kept her myself if I had.

If any of my readers desire nick-nacks from abroad, and think of writing to friends to procure them, allow me to offer them the following suggestions:—

Don't do so till you are sure you cannot get them better and cheaper in London, and this you will find you can do nine times out of ten.

Don't ask a man in a place like Kustendjie to buy something at as distant and un-get-at-able a place as Bagdad—look at an atlas before writing and calculate the distances. Most people seem to think all places in Turkey are to be found within three miles of each other, whereas it would be as reasonable of a friend at Kustendjie to ask you to buy a pair of shoes in Greenland and send them out by next post, as for you to ask him to get you something from Erzeroum.

Also take my word for it that the Foreign Office bags carried by Queen's messengers are not so big as an ordinary sack, and are always pretty full with their lawful freight. I have known a large portmanteau full of baby linen sent to a messenger's lodgings half an hour before he had to start from London, with a nice little note asking him just to slip them into the bags. 'Give my love to my dear girl at Shumla, and say I hope the things will be in time.' Shumla is far in the interior among the Balkans!

Should you hear a friend is coming home, don't ask him to smuggle a lot of things through the various custom-houses he has to pass. If his conscience is sufficiently lax to allow him to do so, probably it will also allow him to swindle you. Should he, on the contrary, be an honest man, you would put him in an awkward position; he may wish to oblige you, but even for that may find it difficult to turn rogue suddenly.

Early one spring the low growls of thunder were audible from time to time all the afternoon in the direction of the Baba Dagh mountains, and, though it was fine with us, it was evident that a considerable storm was raging in the north-east, and we all wished it might forsake the hills and pay a visit to the plains, to lower the unusually high and sultry temperature.

When Clianthe brought in our tea in the evening he said: 'Gentlemen, I trust you will pardon my presumption, and allow me, a servant, to offer you a small piece of advice. Gentlemen, I pray you each night reduce the quantity of milk you put in your tea, and

by the time you have none you may like your tea best without it.'

'But *why* are we to be without milk?'

'Gentlemen, it is yet too early in the spring for the cows to calve, and milk is getting more and more scarce in the land each day, and it engages the services of hundreds of mounted men to collect enough for the great 'Buffle de Dieu.'

'The what?' we all exclaimed in chorus.

'The Buffle de Dieu. Surely, sirs, you have heard of the Buffle de Dieu?'

'No! who may that gentleman be?'

'He is no gentleman, sir; but the miraculous Buffle the Almighty has sent to give instructions to us poor mortals, and to redress the wrongs of poor, oppressed man. We don't know how he came, but one morning last week he was discovered standing with his fore feet planted on the top of one mountain, and his hind legs on the top of another, and spanning miles o valley with his huge body. This was at the rising of the new moon; and when many thousands had gathered together to gaze on the splendid creature, it opened its mouth and spoke in the language of man, and informed the vast multitude of its mission, but finished by saying that to prove man's faith it should not speak again till the next new moon, and till then should require to be supplied with all the milk it could drink; and if this were not done he would return from whence he came and leave the world to its fate. And, gentlemen,

as with man, so with this divine beast, "l'appétit vient en mangeant." At first he was quite happy with three hundred pails of milk in the twenty-four hours, but now he bellows in a truly awful manner if he gets less than five hundred. We fear the supply has either run short this afternoon, or else he is more thirsty than usual—probably the latter, for it has been close and warm; anyhow he has been angry, and surely you must have heard him lowing? The numerous men who are hunting up the supplies have arrived at villages within a few hours of this, and if the cows do not calve soon they will be here, and there will be no milk for anyone.'

'And do you mean to tell us, Clianthe, you seriously believe all this folly?'

'Gentlemen, I am a poor, ignorant fellow, and you know best, but there is no doubting the Buffle de Dieu. Have not thousands seen it and heard it speak? Are not hundreds riding their horses to death to procure it milk? and did not you yourselves hear it roar this afternoon? Thunder! Oh, no, sir! thunder comes in the summer and with lightning—this is quite different; besides, I have to give half as much again for your milk as I did last week, and it is getting very scarce.'

It was useless arguing with Clianthe, his belief was so firmly fixed in his divine buffalo there was no shaking it, and on enquiry next day we found half the native population believed as he did. We did our

utmost to discover how the absurd superstition had arisen, but were never able to make anything out. When we enquired after the new moon how the Buffle was getting on, we were told he had made his communication to a band of wise men, who had written down his instructions, but then the mountain had opened, at the command of the Buffle, and swallowed up wise men, instructions, and all, and there they would remain just twenty years, when the wickedness of the world would be ripe for reformation, and they would be unearthed by some further great convulsion of nature!

What degrading superstition one feels it to be! And yet I am not sure that it requires a journey to Turkey to match it. Do we not know a nation in the West where table-turning is believed in by many? Where also thousands of the lower orders still believe in witchcraft, and where not so very long ago even bishops and clergy would countenance the drowning of some poor, harmless old woman because she was ugly and owned a black cat, and doubtless therefore worked evil to her fellows. Is it not also believed by many in this same highly-enlightened land if thirteen persons sit down to dinner that one will die before the end of the year? Is there not somewhere in the West a poor, feeble old man who believes himself infallible? and, what is stranger, thousands on thousands agree with him, and are quite ready to begin a bloody European war to defend and propagate their belief? The sup-

posed Buffle de Dieu was perched on the hills within eight hours' ride, and one might say it would have been so easy to verify the truth of it. And so it would, but are there not lots of people living in Rome with the Pope, and have they not got the history of his numerous blunders before them, by which they might see that the infallible has failed over and over again?

CHAPTER XXXV.

Superstition—Black horses—Starting for home—Giurgevo—Inundation of Wallachs—Prince Cogwheels-and-guano.

AFTER writing the above, it is rather humiliating to have to confess to gross superstition, but it is an undoubted fact that I am tarred with the same brush, and as my superstition is a Turkish one, I will tell it here. It first came upon me (whilst admiring the points of one of the handsomest black horses that I ever saw in Bulgaria), in the shape of a question from a sedate, wise-looking old Turk.

'Tchellaby, can you own a black horse?'

'Own one!' I said; 'why not?'

'Only because there are many men who cannot. I know many such. It does not matter how they become possessed of a black horse, or how they treat it, some accident is sure to happen to it, and so long as it remains in their possession it will never be sound.'

I did not exactly laugh at him, but I took so little notice of his caution that in an hour's time I had bought the horse and paid a long price for it. The next morning I took out my new purchase, and after riding him about twelve miles returned well pleased

with my bargain, for his paces all proved as good as his looks. Half an hour after he had been in the stable my groom called me to look at him, as there was 'something a little wrong.' I took him out into the yard, and there was indeed something more than a little wrong with the poor beast, for he staggered about with both hind legs, just as if he were drunk behind. We moved him about for half an hour, but it made no difference, and then I had his loins bathed with hot water for an hour, but to no purpose. There was nothing to be seen, and the horse evidently felt no pain, and from his attempts to play proved himself unconscious of his crippled state. I kept him in the stable for a month, gave him green food, turned him out to grass for another month, but it was all useless; as were also the wonderful dodges of the groom, who hung up cow-skulls, and half filled the stable with verses from the Koran and other charms against the evil eye.

The horse got no better and no worse, and at last I sold him for one pound at Medjideer fair, having had but one other bid of fifteen shillings, made by a Tartar butcher, who coveted his fat sides for butcher's meat, the Tartars all being hippophagi.

Just a year after selling him I was standing at my cottage door on the hill near Tchernavoda, when I saw in the valley beneath me a Turk on horseback, playing the jereed, and from the way his horse jumped and turned I could see he was a good one. I therefore sent a groom to fetch rider and horse to the house, and on

their arrival I was greatly struck with the appearance of the latter, and his beautiful, light, springy action.

'Hosh geldin compshi (Welcome, neighbour!); you have a good horse—are you open to a deal?'

'No, Tchellaby, he is the best horse I was ever on, and he suits me well, and I intend keeping him if I can. Besides you would make a poor bargain if I let you have him at a quarter of his value, for you can't own a black horse.'

'Oh, can't I? I will risk that,' said I.

'You have risked it once with this very horse,' replied the Turk, 'and did not make much by it, for I bought it of you last year for one pound.'

Now that I came to examine it more closely I saw it really was the same horse, and I asked the man how on earth he had managed to cure him.

'Come away,' he said, 'out of earshot of your men, and I will tell you, for I owe you something for my bargain. Mine is a valuable secret. You see this bare spot on his back between the two thigh bones? Within half an hour of buying the horse, I burnt him an inch deep with a red-hot iron, and directly I had done so he walked away sound as you see him. Now, good morning, Tchellaby; never buy another black horse, for you cannot own one.' And away he dashed down the hill at a gallop.

Again I was tempted, and bought a black horse, and after riding it a week I lent it to a lady, and whilst walking it through a gap in a low bank it fell lame, and nothing I could do would cure it. I began

to be tired of black horses, and so did not buy one for some time; but, thinking it nonsense to be so superstitious, I have since done so from time to time, and, though I had known some of these horses for years as perfectly sound, no sooner have I bought them than they have turned out cripples, and now, however much I require a horse, when I see one of the fatal colour coming, I do the same as when I meet that old friend who always wants to borrow half-a-crown—look another way.

As I have said before, the breaking up of the grass lands between the Danube and Black Sea by the Tartars increased the ague and intermittent fever to a fearful extent, and, owing to the constant exposure our busy life necessitated, and also, I must confess, to our own recklessness, no one suffered more than R—— and myself. At last it had culminated in a bout of typhus fever with him, and with me the rheumatism I had suffered from ever since my first arrival racked my bones to such an extent I was fast becoming unfit for work. Therefore at the end of a very busy summer, some time after the line had been opened, it was decided by the authorities that we should have a trip home to England to see if a winter there would not put fresh life into us. The life we had led on these plains had been a very jolly one, in spite of the scorching heats of summer and intense colds of winter, the fatiguing rides, bad fare, poor shelter, and constant attacks of fever. We had enjoyed our work and enjoyed our sport. We had made many friends and, I trust, few

enemies. From boys we had grown into men, and had sown our wild oats in the best possible soil, that is to say, in lands well prepared by labour, and we had little to fear from the ripening of the crop. We welcomed the day of departure with keen delight, but still there was a feeling of regret that the old busy life was over; and we should have felt this the more had we not had a hope of renewing it at a not far distant day.

It was early on a fine October morning that we found ourselves on board the 'Franz Josef,' one of the best of the Danube post-boats, with the old familiar cliffs and ravines fast slipping away in our rear, and the vast continent stretching before us, with on beyond home and friends.

We soon settled down and enjoyed the luxury of a cup of *café au lait* and German bread, the former served in cups, the sides of which were so thick that one felt whilst drinking as if one had a gag in one's mouth. We once, and only once, ventured down into the sleeping saloon, thinking to secure berths and stow away our hand-luggage, but the intense heat and overpowering odours, and the snores of some thirty sleeping men, quickly drove us up for fresh air, and we settled at once that no power on earth should make us pass a night there. Soon those who were the least able to stand the poisonous atmosphere came creeping up, looking pale and flabby, with a general appearance about them of having slept in their clothes, and of having dispensed with the usual morning wash.

At eleven A.M. we were all summoned from the

upper deck, where we had been sitting, to breakfast, and I found myself placed next a gentleman-like-looking man, who introduced himself as a Mr. Steele, and with whom we soon made great friends. There was also a newly-married English couple at our end of the long table, who proved most amusing and agreeable travelling companions. Besides these, there was the usual ruck of Jews, Wallacks, Greeks and Russians, talking eighteen to the dozen with both tongues and hands, and at the same time performing the most marvellous juggling tricks with their knives, which they thrust so far down their throats that one looked at the backs of their necks to see if the point had come through. In and out they went like lightning, and yet when our party broke up at the end of three days no one had killed, nor apparently even cut, himself.

The scenery all the way up the river till one reaches 'The Iron Gates' in Servia is rather tame, consisting of low earth-cliffs on the Turkish side, and on the Wallachian vast low meadows, divided and cut up into islands by numberless streams branching out from the parent river. We passed by Silistria, stopping only for a few minutes, and next came to Giurgevo, which is the front door to Wallachia, being the landing-place for Bucharest. The town consists of a few pretentious-looking houses and hotels, intermingled with hovels and drinking shops, and all reeking with the combined smell of petroleum and raki. Here we were inundated with a flood of passengers just arrived from Bucharest, all talking French, and most of them abusing the institu-

tions of their country, from the roads to the prince. The ladies we took on board here had evidently tried to make up for their utter want of good looks by the magnificence of their toilettes, which were all of the newest French fashion; but, being of an over-smart description, and put on in a slovenly manner, gave the wearers an up-all-nightish look anything but taking. The men were also dressed in French fashion, and, from their dark, sallow appearance and general cast of feature, showed clearly that their ancestors, the Roman convicts, had largely intermarried with the gipsy. I was somewhat astonished on making friends with this fresh importation to find that nine out of ten were princes, but Mr. Steele (who seemed to know every country in Europe) assured me that this honourable title was only adopted whilst *en voyage*, and that the numerous cards presented to me did not pass at Bucharest where the owners are known. Scarcely had we left the Quay before a Wallach nobleman with a name sounding like 'Cog-wheels-and-guano,' fixed himself on to me, and do what I would I could not shake him off, or prevent his airing his few words of English for my benefit. He was overwhelmingly civil and attentive, and, having learnt by some direct questions that the money I possessed was all in Napoleons, he became most pressing to change them for me into Austrian gulden, by which transaction he said I should become considerably richer, but as (doubtless owing to my denseness) I could only understand his arithmetic, which he used freely, to convert twice two into five, I declined his

offer. He then evinced the greatest anxiety that I should not suffer from *ennui*, and offered to play any game of cards I might like; but, at that moment seeing Mr. Steele winking and beckoning to me, I wished him good morning I fear somewhat abruptly. Mr. Steele told me he had known this man for years, and that he was one of the numerous sharpers that make a good living by running up and down the river, and doing the unsophisticated.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Orsova—A suspected revolutionist—Vienna—Travelling under false colours—The loveliest sight to English eyes.

I SHALL not attempt to give any description of 'The Iron Gates,' or the long and beautiful gorge above them, as this has been so often done by far more able writers, but will content myself with expressing my profound admiration for them, far surpassing anything I have felt for the much-boasted Rhine scenery.

At the beginning of this gorge is the Hungarian town of Orsova; and the appearance of good houses, well-paved streets, trim gardens, and well-dressed people, was a pleasing and refreshing sight to us who had for years seen only the dirt and untidiness of Turkish towns. All the boats up the river stop at Orsova to have the luggage examined, and passports inspected. Mr. Steele accompanied us to the custom-house, and by his advice we showed such readiness to open all our goods that our troubles were soon over; and we then walked along the quay to rejoin the boat, which had in the meantime moved up the river till opposite the passport office. All our passports had

been taken from us when we first landed, and, soon after we were on board again, an Austrian official arrived, and calling out our names, or what he supposed them to be, handed them back to us with a polite bow, but without a remark, till he came to Mr. Steele, whose name he called last. We English were all sitting together, and, on hearing his name called, Mr. Steele held out his hand for his passport, without stopping the flow of an amusing anecdote he was telling. The Austrian looked at him searchingly for a few moments, and then asked him in German if the passport he held in his hand were his. Mr. Steele begged us to explain that he did not understand German, but perhaps the gentleman could speak French, and, if so, he would be happy to talk to him for an hour. The following conversation then took place in French:

'Are you an Englishman?'

'Yes, indeed' (with a laugh).

'You will perhaps give your word you are not Monsieur H——?'

'Why do you ask? Have you not got my passport, and does it not state who I am? I am an Englishman. Ask these gentlemen if I am not.'

'Pardon, sir, but you greatly resemble a Monsieur H——, a refugee, who has offended against the Austrian Government, and whose life is forfeited if he is ever taken in Austria.'

'Well, before you hang me you had better make quite sure you have the right man. The English do not like such mistakes, and I should fancy you would

have a bad time of it with your own authorities if you make a blunder. You can detain me if you like, but I shall hold you responsible for the loss my business will sustain during the time you do so.'

The officer was in a fix; he evidently was nearly sure, but not quite; he hesitated a minute and then gave up the passport, but as he left the steamer I saw him beckon up a soldier, and, pointing out our party, leave him to guard the gangway. No sooner had he gone than Mr. Steele, calling him a blundering block-head, went on with his story. In a few minutes back came the Austrian and two others with him, and, planting themselves in front of us, proceeded to examine Mr. Steele as if he were some curious plant and they botanists. Fortunately the two new-comers did not catch the likeness that the first thought he had detected, and so the three, with low bows and many apologies, wished us good day.

The same evening I was sitting on deck chatting with Mr. Steele, when he turned to me and said, 'I am sure you won't betray me, so I don't mind telling you that that is a remarkably cute fellow at the Orsova custom-house. He very nearly distinguished himself to-day, and I think would have done so if the other two had not been such fools. He would have got his promotion if he had, and I am almost sorry for him. He was quite right; I am Monsieur H——, and if I am caught here on Austrian territory I shall be shot. I fought against them in the revolution, and since then have been living in London, and have now returned *viâ*

Constantinople to see if anything can be done in the old way.'

The enjoyment I took in my friend's company was a good deal damped, and as soon as I decently could I wished him good-night, feeling thankful he had not got us into some troublesome mess.

We continued our journey to Vienna by river, but Mr. Steele took the railroad at Baziash, so we did not see anything more of him.

The scenery is pretty all the way through Hungary, but there is nothing very striking, and I was glad when the long, tedious journey by water was over, and we were comfortably settled in the Archduke Charles Hotel, with Herr Schneider, the landlord, and Spanner, the Ober Kelner, to make us comfortable within, and Julius, the best of commissioners, to do the honours of the town, and show us the lions. Since then I have often passed through Vienna, and spent many pleasant days there, and have always met with great kindness and attention from every one I have had to do with; and there is something so cheery and pleasant about the Viennese that I would rather live among them than any other people in Europe. We left Vienna the following day, and did not break our journey again till we got to Paris, though we very nearly did so at Strasbourg much against our will. We were travelling in the days before passports were abolished for Englishmen, and on giving up ours at Strasbourg we were informed by the official that we could not pass, as they were not in proper order, not having been *visèed* within the last six

months. Here was a pretty fix! but, putting great faith in our powers of persuasion, we with many bows and scrapes gave a short history of ourselves, a longer one of the French nation, and ended by saying that 'such a glorious people as the French were too grand to fear a couple of Englishmen, and might well laugh if all the armies of the world were at their door; and Monsieur himself had such nobleness of disposition depicted on his expressive countenance that it was easy to perceive he was racked with pain at having to execute this unpleasant task. Could not Monsieur out of his fertile brain originate some plan whereby two strangers, who threw themselves on his generosity, might be helped?'

He was a good old fellow, and so detaining our passports allowed us to proceed, telling us he would forward them to the Minister of the Interior with a letter of explanation, and that we must call on this great man, who perhaps would deign not to eat us for our presumption in getting into France without our passports. On arriving in Paris we went to our hotel, and next morning told the state of affairs to the clerk, who proved a most obliging person. He told us it was necessary to have passports to get out of France, but that if we went to the Minister of the Interior about our own, he would detain us some days, as the one ruling principle in his office was, how *not* to do a thing, but if we would leave it to him he would see what could be done. Before we had finished breakfast the clerk came to us with a passport, which he said had

been in his desk for years, and would in all probability never be claimed. We might take it, and he felt sure we should have no trouble in passing out of the country.

It was very good-natured of the clerk, for naturally it was to his interest and to that of the hotel that we should be detained there as long as possible. I opened the passport and found it belonged to the Viscount Pollington, travelling with his friend the Honourable John Savile (I believe I am correct in the names); so allowing R—— the more distinguished title, I, for once, became an Honourable. On arriving at Calais and being ushered into the office, R—— handed in our passport the second person, hoping by doing so to get it back soon and be relieved of our suspense. As it happened, however, all the passports were piled one on the top of the other, carried into an inner office, turned upside down and brought out again, and delivered as fast as a clerk could sign the *permis*. The result was that we received ours the last but one, and when R—— answered to his honourable title, I was standing by the side of the last unfortunate, a sturdy Englishman. He caught the name, stared hard at R——, and then exclaimed, 'Well, I be blowed!' I gave him a nudge, and told him to mind his own business, but the old passport officer, hearing something going on, turned to me, and said, 'What, sare, you remark?'

I at once replied, 'Oh, nothing! I expect to be blowed to-night!'

'That very likely, sare.' Then turning to R——

he continued, 'You travelling with your servant, sare?'

R—— indignantly, 'No; my *friend.*'

'Ah, mille pardons, sare, I do perceive he is honourable too!' and with a profound bow he handed over the passport and the *permis.*

In a few minutes we were on board, and tearing the passport to pieces we threw it overboard. This was hardly done when the sturdy Briton, who in his surprise at the office had so nearly got us into a scrape, came up, and addressing me said, 'I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance; but one thing I do know, you are not Mr. Savile, nor is your friend Viscount Pollington, nor are either of you in the least like them.'

We told him how we came to be running under false colours; but I noticed that he gave us a wide berth, and evidently thought us dangerous characters.

If this by any odd chance should ever at some future time come into the hands of one or both of the gentlemen who so unwittingly helped us in a time of need, allow me to offer them my sincere thanks, and at the same time apologise for the liberty we took with their names; and if either of them should ever wish to do as they were done by, they are at liberty to call at the office of the Minister of the Interior and carry off our passports.

I had steamed down the Mediterranean, amid the islands of the Archipelago, and through the Sea of Marmora; had gazed at different times and from different points on the ever-lovely Bosphorus; had just seen the gorge of the Iron Gates on the Danube, and slipped

through the Alps around Salzburg, but, grand or beautiful as all these were, there now rose before our eyes a sight worth them all—the chalk cliffs of Dover! It is not every one that has the power of admiring them; they look poor tame things to the sea-sick pleasure tourist, and most sad to those outward-bound for years of exile; but to those whose banishment is over, and who are hastening back to home and friends, there is nothing more beautiful.

Before running into the harbour, however, and getting confused at hearing every one speaking English, and all, to our unaccustomed ears, apparently addressing us, I must wish my readers good-bye, and at the same time ask them to pardon me for taking them so far away from 'Between the Danube and Black Sea.'

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